THE WINGED WAGON

EARLY DAYS OF I.A.F. AND R.P.A.F. - 1929 - 1944

By:

W/C A. B. AWAN

No. 1 SQUADRON INDIAN AIR FORCE—DRIGH ROAD SIND 1936-37.

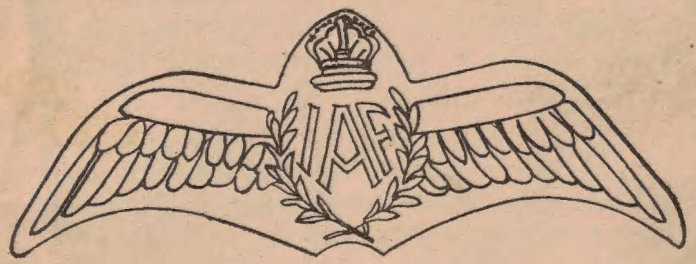
Seated :- F/sgt Hickey, W/o Harper, P/o Mehar Singh, F/o H.U. Khan, F/o Narendra, F/o Engineer, F/o Mukerjee, F/lt Rogers (Adjutant), S/L Hancock (O.C.), F/lt Wilkins, F/o Awan F/o Majumdar, F/o Rungnadan, F/o Ravinder Singh, W/o Parson, & a B.O.R. Sergeant, With senior British N. C. O. & Indian Airmen.

ROLL OF HONOUR

To Lieutenants Hardit Singh Malik, Roy, Sen and a fourth person whose name is long forgotten. They took part in the first world war 1914-1918 as the first Indian Aviators in Military Aviation and the Royal Flying Corps.

I have now found out that the fourth Indian gentleman was Valenkar from Bombay. Hardit Singh Malik is still alive and going strong.

A. B. Awan
Wing Commander
22 November 1954.



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Khalid Bin Walid one of the best fighting soldier Generals of the world lay on his death bed due to old age. Friends and relations came to see him. Tears trickled down his cheeks. They asked him why was he so sorrowful. He replied "The whole of my body is full of scars from wounds received on the battlefields. Why didn't I die on the battleground instead of meeting death due to old age."

ROLL OF HONOUR 1930 - 1944

P/O Amarjit Singh (1 Sqdn) 1933
P/O Bhupender Singh (1 Sqdn) 1933
P/O Razaullah Khan 1941
P/O D.A P. Majou 1941
P/O Mustafa Hussain (6 Sqdn)
P/O Reporter 1944 (6 Sqdn)
P/O Munshi (3 Sqdn) 1944
P/O K. Chowdhri
P/O Pasha
P/O Zahid Hussain
F/O Abdul Ali
F/O Larive
F/O Gopal Krishan
A/P/O Dayar
P/O Padu Kone
P/O Bannerjee
F/O Sen
F/O Thaper (6 Sqdn) 1944
F/O Babra (6 Sqdn) 1944
F/O Kartar Singh Saund (2 Sqdn Imphal)
F/O Kartar Singh (7 Sqdn Peshawar)
F/O Rajpal Singh
F/O Latif (7 Sqdn Kumbirgram 1944)
F/O Iqbal Singh (3 Sqdn)
F/O Dada Bhoy (2 Sqdn)
F/O Joseph
F/O Khosla
F/O Lalla (3 Sqdn)
F/O Bashir Ahmad (6 Sqdn)
F/O Daniel
F/O Samuel
P/O Mukerjee
F/O Bhanjdeo
F/O Benu Das (1941)
S/L Henry Ranganadan (1 Sqdn)
S/L Habeebullah Khan (2 Sqdn)
F/O Delima
P/O Delima
F/O Sanjana
F/O Moses
F/O Sanjana (Sqdn)
F/O Patwardhan (Prince of Sangli)
F/O Kaisrani (1 Sqdn Imphal)
F/O Deuskar (1 Sqdn Burma)
F/O Murkot (1 Sqdn Imphal)
F/O Gajinder Singh (7 Squadron Risalpur)
F/O Ajit Singh (7 Sqdn)
F/O Manmohan Singh
P/O Murli Dhar
P/O Chand (8 Sqdn Peshawar)
P/O Sekhon
P/O Sandhu (8 Sqdn Peshawar)
P/O Gosh
P/O Qazi
P/O Nasiruddin
P/O Balekar
P/O George Vergise
P/O Pinto
P/O Jaya Chandra Raj (6 Sqdn)
P/O George (7 Sqdn)
P/O Wali Mohammad
P/O Ghulam Nabi Khan
F/O Shivpur
F/O Billimoria
P/O Zia
F/O Tayabji
W/C Kurun Krishan Majumdar D.F.C.
S/L Prithipal Singh
F/LT Hem Chowdhri
Air Commodore Mehar Singh D. S. O. D. F. C.
Namgiyal (Prince of Sikkim)
Air Commodore Narinder Flight Lieutenant Tandan. Air Marshal Subrato Mukerjee

Death on the battle fields and in the sky is the most glorious thing a man can ask for. Old Airmen never die, but just fade away.

In the year 1914-15, a few Indian students studying in British universities, left their studies and joined the British Air Force for war against Germany. Lieutenants Hardit Singh Malik, Sen, Roy, and Valenkar were the first four. Hardit Singh Malik is today an Ambassador in Canada. Roy, Sen and Valenkar were killed in flying operations against Germany in the first World war. Their names live for ever in the history of Indian Aviation.

During the Coronation in 1937 I met Ms. Sen who was living in London. She showed me a photograph of her husband Lieutenant Sen in the uniform of the Royal Flying Corps. It is a great pity that we lost such able men.

One fine day in a ltitle town of the N.W. Frontier, called D.I.K.;P.T. instructor Pandit Bhowani Das came running in the school and announced with great jubilation that today the Government was pleased to close all schools in order that boys may see a bird man arrive in an aeroplane. This was the year 1916. Thousands watched a British Military pilot circle an improvised landing ground at a height of two thousand feet and then make a landing. The aviator was mobbed. I cannot describe the scene. I was only six years old. It was an awe inspiring sight which still thrills me when I think of it. Never had a birdman been seen before along with his contraption descending from the skies. Years later when I joined No. 16 A.C. Squadron Royal Air Force old Sarum as a Pilot Officer, my British flight Commander, F/Lt Pattison told me "If you come from D.I.K. you as a child must have seen me. I was the first pilot who landed in D.I.K. in the year 1916 in a D.H.9A. I was then a Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps. I was also shot down by the tribesmen in 1919 in the near vicinity of Tank. With a bullet through the oil tank of my DH 9A. I crash landed at Tank landing ground in the midst of a big collection of camels. I was soaking wet with oil which had splashed all over the cock-pit and my face and eyes."

From the days of Afghan war of 1921 on wards; Indian News papers were always full of account of the R.A.F. operations over the North-West Frontier. D.H.9A's and later Bristol Fighters; remnants of the first World

War 1914-1918 were used. Tribesmen could never stand upto the aeroplane. Machine guns and Field or mountain guns never frightened the tribesmen. An aeroplane alone could get them out of the caves. Standard equipment of a Bristol Fighter those days was a front gun and a Lewis machine gun fired by the rear gunner. Front gun fired through the propellor by a means of a Constantinesco synchronising gear.

It was the year 1927-28. On an after-noon during winter, seven Vickers Victoria troop carriers flew low over the city of Lahore. The noise was so terriflic that the entire class of boys in the Government College ran out to see the fun. Professor Chopra asked us whether Bach a-i Sachao, the rebel king of Afghanistan had attacked the city of Lahore. Victoria troop carriers played a gallant part in the evacuation of Kabul during the abdication of King Amanullah of Afghanistan, British and Indian citizens were flown to Peshawar Aerodrome from Kabul which never possessed a landing ground. It was during 1927-28 that a brave young pilot from R.A.F. Station Peshawar was killed when he tried to fly underneath Attock bridge over the river Indus. The pilot officer was killed but story of his courage spread far and wide over the length and breadth of the N.W. Frontier.

Our Indian Political leaders struggled for years to get Indian officers with a King's Commission into the army in India. Skeene Committee on which Motilal Nehru, Mohd. Ali Jinnah and Doctor Moonje also served as members had recommended the formation of an Indian Air Force and Indian Navy as early as 1926-27. In the year 1928 one vacancy was offered at the R.A.F. College Cranwell but no one came forward. In 1929 three vacancies were offered. I was a student in the third year of Government College Lahore. Heroic stories of the Royal Air Force on the North West Frontier, fascinatied me. With this was combined the charm of creating a national service in the form of a nucleus of the Indian Air Force. This attracted me and I sent an application to Air Head Quarters Simla. In due course a reply was received in which I was asked to R.A.F. station Ambala for the medical test. In the blazing heat of Ambala Cantonment I reached the M.I. Room of the R.A.F. Station. Length and breadth of the aerodrome with those massive hangars

filled my very soul with thrill. I was only eighteen. Outside the M.I. Room I met Rao and we introduced ourselves. A third boy had come from Calcutta. Years later when Rao was serving with Tata Airline he met me in Bombay, when I was a fully fledged Flying Officer in the Indian Air Force. I enquired after that very nice Bengali boy who appeared in the first medical inspection in Ambala. Rao was very sorry to inform me that the boy had died in Calcutta a few years ago.

When waiting for the medical inspection a Westland Wapiti glided in to land at the aerodrome. Huge shape of a Westland Wapiti thrilled us. As school boys we were already frightened of the medical inspection. In Comic movies we had seen a few peculiar things in medical tests. British Doctor was an exceedingly nice man. We later learnt in service with the Royal Air Force that the Squadron 'Doc' is invariably a charming man. Without a Doc a squadron is hardly complete. He is always jolly by nature and good at Golf, cricket and Tennis. There is hardly any medical work in the Squadron as all the lads are fighting fit. And when there is an emergency or a surgical case; 'Doc' always bundles off the patient to the British Military hospital. He thus has hardly any worries at all. In the Officers Mess he is always number one with drinks and Jokes.

Windy and I shared a room at the Woodlands hotel old Delhi. Public Service Commission examination was held at Metcalfe. House. Nearly five hundred Indian boys from all over India came to compete in the examinamination held by the British Public Service Commission in collaboration with our Public Service Commission; for entry to the R.A.F. College Cranwell, Royal Military College Sandhurst, and Royal Military Academy Woolwich.

The interview and written examination was completed in June 1929. We disappeared back to our Colleges. Windy and I were both certain to get in. Two months later when the results came; both of us had failed. I failed by three marks in the interview but passed in the written examination for Cranwell. My pal Windy had also passed in the written examination but failed to secure a good position for Sandhurst. With a heavy heart we congratulated and said good bye to College comrades who left for

England. No one was successful for Cranwell or Woolwich. Rodriques from Prince of Wales's Royal Military College Dehra Dun was selected for Cranwell but he quickly changed his choice to Sandhurst as he did not like to be the only Indian Cadet at the R.A.F. College.

Then came November 1929. Windy and I were back again in Delhi for the Federal Public Service Commission Examination which was held at Metcalfe House. Written examination went on smoothly. Papers were prepared by the British Public Service Commission. Colonel Macanachy was a general Supervisor. Wing Commander Peterson represented Air Headquarters on the interview board, which consisted of at least one British Major General, one Brigadier, one Colonel, an officer from the Navy, and Doctor Moonje; one of our political leaders. Doctor Moonje was very keen on the Air Force He helped me a great deal when I got stuck at one spot in the interview. Results were announced in January 1930. I was successful this time Thank God! Six boys were taken for the R.A.F. College. Two for the Royal Military Academy Woolwich and thirty for the Royal Military College Sandhurst. Windy was also successful for Sandurst and we had a great party in Lahore. We could not join the April term as passage could not be arranged in time. We left Bombay on the 2nd of August 1930 by P. and O. Ocean Liner S.S. Kaiser-i-Hind.

Raja Allah Dad, Windy, and Afzal shared a cabin. Hayauddin, Singh, and I shared an adjacent cabin. The ship left with pomp and glory from Ballard Pier Bombay. Prem Singh Gayani's father and mother waved out to their son with tears of joy. The tug pulled the ship out of the pier. She soon picked up speed under her own steam. Gateway of India gradually disappeared majestically over the horizon. Soon there was only a thin dark line that demarcated the coast line of our beloved motherland.

Hayauddin came to me and said "Let us look below the stern of the ship". We went to the stern. A heavy gale was lashing the sea into fury. There was very heavy pitching and rolling. Sensation was not at all enjoyable. Hayauddin was the first to get sea sick. Soon I saw Windy disappear below the stair case towards his cabin. Chacha Afzal was the next on the list. Then Raja

Allah Dad. I saw Bhupinder and Amarjit gradually slide away. By this time I was almost feeling ill. We all quickly changed into pyjamas and got into bed. Many of us had never seen the sea before. I had never seen a ship in my life. On the N.W. Frontier, We had heard of sea sickness and pitching and rolling of a ship but never did I immagine, that Kaiser-i-Hind; Queen of the P & O Ocean liners will be thrown about in the heavy monsoons like a little toy in the water. Then I looked at the roof of the cabin. At times the entire roof looked tilted to one side. Then it would tilt to the other side. There was such a frightening creaking sound from the cabin. It felt as if the ship would break into two any moment. Two days passed but none of us had the courage to get up and go to the dining room. Practically all passengers were in their cabins. On the third day I felt like having somefood. I rang the bell for the Steward. From the next cabin I heard Raja Allahabad calling the Steward "Rebello-You damn fellow-Rebello-teri Man Di- bring me-some food." For the next seven days, Rebello was the only bright spot that provided some fun in our sea sickness. One Steward between two cabins is a bit too little. Result was that Rebello was on the run the whole time. Bell rang too often and some times Rebello would come running in with a little temper and with his broken English "You all ring bell too often-Rebello one man-cannot lookafter so many You all go to dining room- You all are Windy- You are Cowards". Then Raja Allah Dad's call came from the next cabin. "Rebello you damn fellow- Rebello-teri man Di- I am dying- I want some rice and pickles".

On the seventh day the ship reached Aden and we thanked God to get out of the Indian Ocean and the monsoons.

We were very thankful to get away from our ship Kaiser-i-Hind and put our feet on Terra Firma again. The ship stopped nearly half a mile outside the harbour in deep water. We were taken out in a motor boat. Doctor Hayat from the Frontier Province was visiting Aden on temporary posting. A few prominent citizens of Aden had come to collect Doctor Hayat. He asked Hayauddin if Windy and I would go along and see the life on the outskirts of Aden. We went along with Doctor Hayat to the Arab residential Quarters. We sat in a local club.

Cold drinks were brought for us. These went down so well as compared to drinking a lemonade on a rolling ship. These men looked very nice and hospitable. After about half an hour or so we said good bye to Doctor Hayat who had to spend one year on a Medical mission with these men. A motor boat brought us back to the ship. Red sea took another four hot boiling days. Thank God it was comparitively calmer. Rebello was getting less bad tempered and we started venturing out to the dining room when the sea was not so rough. There were still half the number of passengers missing from the dining room.

Late in the evening we entered the Suez Canal. Egyptian coast line looked nice and green. On our right the Arabian Coast looked barren and a waste desert. There was something fresh in the air. Afzal, Umrao Singh, Raza, Amarjit, Bhupinder, Hayauddin and I decided to bring our sheets and pillows from our cabins and sleep on the deck in order to enjoy a moonlit night sleep and feel the freshness of a Mediterranean morning.

The experience was wonderful. After nearly eleven days of heat and suffocation and hardship on a rough sea, a gentle glide up the Suez Canal in the moonlight and freshness of an Egyptian morning was such a pleasant surprise. We woke up in the morning to find a train running at full speed past the ship on the left bank of the canal. The train was the same as our Indian trains; One train carrying about twenty thousands men, women and children, half of them popping their heads out of the windows. Right bank of canal on the Arabian side looked a perfect desert where a camel carvan probably passed once a year.

Port Said provided a pleasant change. We went to the Museum. Quite a number of guides volunteered to take us to see interesting places, what every young man wants to see in a port town. Luckily; being very young, we were all frightened of too many crooks. We confined our attention to the local museum and a little shopping. However we could not avoid the inescapable picture post cards.

At Port Said a good number of holiday makers from European countries came on board. English men and women were in a large number. Within a few days

from Port Said, a sports committee was formed. Sports Committee was an outcome of the hard work done by a few English youngmen from Oxford and Cambridge Universities who were on board the ship after spending their holidays in Egypt.

Before we reached Marseilles all the deck games were decided. Majority of the deck games were won by the Indian Cadets. This was really a good show, and the event was coblerated with a fancy dress ball. All of us took part in the fancy dress ball. The ship was full of young and good looking dames. Perfect entertainment was provided.

In Marsailes we saw a few historical places including the Church of Notre Dame. Public Park was delightful. We were informed that during the war of 1914-1918, some of the Indian troops had a camp in this park. They must have had a very good time in the beautiful environments.

I don't remember much about our touching Gibralter or the journey through the bay of Biscay which again became rough. Finally we berthed in Tillbury Docks. We were all very inexperienced in travel and quickness with which customs, Immigration, and health formalities should be observed. We were the last to board the train which took us to London town. I remember Amarjit, Bhupinder, Raza, Hayauddin and I almost running along the platform as the whistle had gone and the train was just about to move out.

At London; Kings Cross or Waterloo station; I do not remember which; we found our official guardian Mr. Wilkinson I.C.S. waiting for us. He was dressed in a black lounge suite and a bowler hat and had a folded umprella in his hand. He was most courteous and took us outside the station, where a huge bus was waiting for us and our luggage. Nothing was told to us about where we were going. It was so exciting. This town of London, the pivot and hub of the British Empire throbbed with life. It was about 30th August in 1930. There was bright sunshine and we were told that there was a heat wave and one man had died in London. However it did not feel anything like a heat wave to us who had just arrived from

Lahore, Delhi and Bombay with a temperature of 110° Farenheit. The well dressed crowds in the streets simply amazed us.

Soon we were moving pretty fast along a main highway; probably the Great West Road. After approximately two hours we reached the Royal Military College Sandhurst. Just outside the main gate of the College, Mr. Wilkinson asked Amarjit, Singh, Bhupinder Singh, Tandan and myself to get down at the Duke of York's hotel Camberly as the rest of the boys had to be entered into the College. We were to stay for five days at the Duke of York's hotel Camberley and then go by train to London and be at the R.A.F. College Cranwell by 7th September.

That night we were so tired that we went to bed after early dinner. Next morning we had a very nice breakfast and then decided to go to the Royal Military College andsee our pals, Windy, Haya, Raja Allah Dad, Gyan Dubey, Umrao Singh, Chacha Afzal Etc. at work. We were excepting to see our pals having a good time rowing in the lake or playing a gramophone in their rooms and trying to familiarize themselves with the English music which appeared so foreign to us.

The four of us wandered across the main iron gate of the college in a most liesurely manner. It was a warm day. We still had our silk suites on, tailored by Ilam Din, Anarkali Lahore. All types of multi-coloured rainbow ties were worn by us. Gradually we wandered across the side of a big lake and up the road till we came near to the main buildings and the square. In the distance we saw about two companies of gentle men cadets at foot and rifle drill. Suddenly the piercing roar of a Sergeant Major split the serene silence "Company-Slope-Arms- By the left quick march." - Now orders were being given in quick succession. "Change direction right-right-form" In an African jungle the roar of a lion could not have frightened us more than the words of command of that Sergeant Major.

Lo and behold!- To our left we saw lines of snookies only arrived at the College a few days ago. Amongst lines of English boys we spotted Windy, Raja

Allah Dad, Umrao Singh, Dubey, Chacha Afzal, Hayauddin etc. "Atten-tion, heads up Sir- Chin in Sir! You all look like a bunch of girl guides; Pull your stomach in- shoulders back- Stand-up - Stand up- Sir! Look at me- how I stand". We had a look at the Sergeant Major who was taking the snookies squad. was he a human being or something else-. He looked like a statue to me. An iron or bronze statue. Poor snookies looked helpless. There was no expression on anyones face except discipline and sweat. "Atten-tion, Right turn-By the right-quick march." Snookies marched up and down the tarmac in lounge suites and bowler hats. Perspiration trickled down their forehead. Mamma's love and Papa's affection was gone and forgotton. "Swing those arms-swing those! higher-higher-higher!". "Head up Sir-Chin in sir-put your stomachs in-you are like a bunch of girl guides". The lions roar echold through the College grounds.

"Come on brother" I said to Amarjit. "Let us beat it. One month of this would kill all of our pals. I hope Cranwell is not like this. Do they have guardsmen as inrtructors there also? God help us!" When we left the iron gate, Sergeant Major's thundering command was still echoing across the lake. They were still at it. Good God-! one month of this would kill anyone. We had lunch at Duke of York's hotel. We were speachless for half an hour. During Soup, fish or pudding. The figure of a tall and broad Sergeant Major- looking like a bronze statue was before my eyes. The roar, echoing from those awe inspiring buildings still lingered in my ears. Then we had a good laugh. Anyway all this is good for you. We all agreed.

Next day was a Sunday. We were still at our break-fast in Duke of York's hotel when a few of our commrades from the Military College came in. Windy came in with a burst of laughter "I saw you fellows on the horizon when we were getting hell from she Sergeant Major. - What did you think of the snookies drill?" We all had a good laugh. Zulfiqar and Inder Sen Chopra were also there along with our friends. Both these were old comrades from the Government College Lahore. "Come on boys- We shall give you a spot of boating in the lake and some tea and refreshments in the Admiral's

rest house." Said Zulfiqar incidentally Admiral was the nick name of the person in charge of boats in the lake. Liesurely we strolled up to the boat station. Today all cadets had their College blazers (red and white stripes) and caps. Just in front of the boat station we were introduced to Cadet Ibn-i-Hassan who was in the second term along with Zulfiqar, Inder Sen Chopra, Atma Singh etc. etc. Ibn-i-Hassan was very nice to us. Generally senior term cadets are slightly conceited and especially when engaged in conversation with snookies. "Rowing is so enjoyable in the lake today. There is a lovely breeze. You will love it". With this Ibn-i-Hassan pushed off. "Morning-Admirall" Zulfiqar wished a rather elderly looking gentleman. "Please give us a nice boat- and we shall have some tea on return".

We paddled about in the lake for an hour or so. It was really a fine day, with no rain clouds. There was a gentle breeze. Half way down the lake, Zulfiqar put the gramaphone on which he had brought from his room. "Happy days are here again - the skies above are clear again- Let us sing a song of cheer again-. Happy days are here again". The music and song were beautifull. It was such a departure from our Indian music and song but still it appealed to us so much.

"Life like this is beautiful at the college". Said Zulfiqar "At times drill, parades and P.T. get on your nerves in the early phases but later on it is a matter of routine and you enjoy it. Studies also get boring and monotonous but the fun of life is in organized games, like Football, Soccer, Hockey, Squash, fencing, swimming, athletics, and cricket. I curse myself for having strained a knee muscle during the last University games at Lahore. I have not been able to do a thing in any organised game here. But some of our boys are doing well in practically all games. You have great fun if you get in the first eleven. Standard of games is very high at Sandhurst, Woolwich and Cranwell, as you will see".

We changed the record to another song. Then Zulfiqar said "Have you heard a naughty song-. This is sung by a leading girl on the English stage. This song and the/theme has been strongly objected to in the Houses of Parliament recently. People say that the song and the record is being banned".

I have forgotten the song and the name of the woman who sang it. English language was new to us as a spoken language. We had only read books in our Indian schools. But had no idea of the spoken language in every day use in England. Melody of the song floated across the lake. The theme was something about- "My man of war-and the advances he makes in the stillness of the night- I can hardly resist". The language having a very distant and double meanings was rather difficult for us who had only a few days in the country. Later on while at Cranwell I tried to obtain this record from a local gramaphone Stores in Grantham but the girl merely giggled and said "This record has been banned- it is supposed to be very naughty".

Three days later Mr. Wilkinson, C.I.E. I.C.S. who was our official guardian, took us to his house in Ascot for lunch. He had a platial house with a lovely lawn and a Tennis court. His Drawing room was full of photographs of Indian Ruling Princes. Many pictures were from Nepal.

One day later we were told to be at King's Cross Railway Station in order to catch the same train as the other English boys were taking for reporting at Cranwell. Here we met Mukerjee who had come along with his friends and relations. There was a party of at least forty English boys who were also going to the R.A.F. College.

Mr. Wilkinson bade us goodbye. "I shall soon come to see you at Cranwell within a month". he said. Whistle blew and the train puffed out. We were rather surprised to find ourselves in third class compartment as we were used to travelling in first class in India. But the English third class coaches were better than our 1st class saloon cars of Indian Railways.

Railway journey from King's Cross Railway Station through Peterborough was interesting. Our body and soul was full of hope. Eventually after about four to five hours, the train rolled into Sleaford or Grantham Station. I do not remember correctly which one but I think it was Sleaford. Here Joe Beresfod Cadet Wing Sergeant Major and Flight Sergeant Curtiss of 'A' Squadron were waiting for us with a few heavy R.A.F. type trucks and two Trojan vans. There were nearly thirty

five British Cadets and six of us from India. When we reached the College, tea was ready in the dinning hall. A hot cup of tea increased our morale. In the Cadets ante room; Squadrons and huts were allocated to all of us. Mookerje and I were in 'A' Squadron. Bhupinder Singh and Amarjit Singh in 'B' Squadron. Tandon and Sircar went to 'C' Squadron.

Our batman Willie Dean met us in the hut. In a large room there were five steel beds and one chest of drawers near each bed. Attached to the bed room was a study room with five tables and chairs on one side; a toilet room and a bath and Willie's cabin on the other side. This was the old college which was in existence after World War I.

Mukerjee and I unpacked our kit. Time passed on. Willie filled up a lovely hot bath. Here we were to take a bath every evening, before changing for dinner. Our uniform and mess kit was not ready. Regulations permitted a dinner jacket. Bath in the evening was a departure from our Indian custom of having a shower every morning. However, new customs had to be adopted. 'In Rome do as the Romans do'. In a cold country a hot bath in the evening is the only answer.

We had a very quiet supper in the dining hall. Everyone was so shy and reserved. Even the British cadets hardly talked to each other. We listened to some music from B.B.C. in the ante-room. I was still not used to British music. Some tunes sounded a little unusual and peculiar. When we returned to our huts we were so tired. I fell fast asleep almost as I entered my bed.

When we woke up in the morning there was glorious sun shine. In the hut Mukerjee and I were the only two occupants. Senior term cadets were still away on leave. After a shave and wash I want into the mess for breakfast. Everything looked quiet. After exchanging a pleasant good morning with the British cadets I sat down to a nice breakfast; Porridge and corn flakes, fried eggs and toast, Marmalade and toast and tea. Every cadet was expected to que up near the service table and obtain food by turn.

Cadets ante room contained very nice and comfortable leather covered furniture. A very nice radio

gram and radio set stood in a corner. A delightful collection of records was available. As far as illustrated and daily news papers were concerned; everything was laid out on a big table. This was a paradise for young boys at the average age group of eighteen and nineteen. We did not realise till after the general beat up which came like a bolt from the blue; that the ante room had a senior's corner for the fourth term cadets and a junior's corner for the third and second terms. 1st term snookies were considered to be orphans of the storm; out-castes or untouchables, putting it in our Indian phraseology. We were tresspassing across the sacred territory of the oberlords of Cranwell; the blue eyed boys of the fourth term. What fun we had for full four days, till the seniors turned up!

For four days Cranwell looked like a land of Lotus Eaters, a bed of roses and bowl of cherries. Except for the books, P.T. clothes, rifles and parade boots etc. which were collected from the Wing Stores with the help of Sergeant Major, Joe Beressford; there was no other work. In the evening Mukerjee and I strolled across the football grounds to watch some airmen play soccer. We also strolled across some fields, which looked so quiet and peaceful. Lincolnshire vale stretched in front of us. Many of the fields were ploughed up. Ante room was the main centre of attraction. All of us were there after meals; busy with news-papers, music or billiards.

When the seniors turned up from leave they did not like our tresspass across their sacred ground. After lunch, John Peel lay in one sofa set. Nichi Coombe lay in another. Berens was engaged in changing the music programme on the radio gram. The fourth termers came in. One of the under officers either Hogan or Gaskel, announced on the spot that there will be a beat up tomorrow evening after dinner. Mukerjee looked at me with not too cheerful an expression. He had spent some time in London in a school and he knew all the customs of English schools and colleges. I asked him whether there was any cause for alarm, to which he replied "It depends upon the intensity of the beat up-. It may be very mild. It may have some severe punishment in it." I talked to Thomas Gale who was in my term and in the same hut. Thomas came from Halton and knew the traditions at Halton and Cranwell. He admitted quite frankly that

the idea was not pleasant at all, but it was a fixture and snookies always had to go through it. At times it could be enjoyable but it could have bad moments also for the poor snookies who had to perform the act. For the seniors, it was grand fun and produced mirth and laughter.

We were informed quite early in the day that Indian Cadets not being accustomed to beat up carried out in English Public Schools and colleges would be permitted to sing a native song and then disappear altogether out of the room. But the other British boys were going to be fixed up good and proper especially as they were considered to be very cheeky in violating customs of the ante room.

A day earlier we got together to practise singing an Indian love song. All six of us went outside the college compund to the nearest field and sat on a stone wall in order to practise and sing together. Mukerjee could not speak a word of urdu what to say of singing a song. Tandon could not understand Punjabi. Therefore we decided to sing a popular urdu song together. As Mukerjee could not utter a word, we told him to open his mouth and hum only in order to appear as if he were singing. I wish I had a camera to take a picture of six of us, Sircar, Tandon, Amarjit, Bhupinder Singh, Mukerjee and I; all below nineteen years of age, sitting on a farm fenced wall singing an Indian love song for which we had no idea of the tune or rythm. At the second practice, a poor frightened English farmer popped his head out of a nearly fenced hedge to see what was happening.

On the eve of beat up, there was a general expression of joy and expectation of fun on every senior's face. We all were still in black dinner jackets as our mess kits were with Burberrys. After roll call; instructors, Squadron officers, and senior cadets started moving towards the dinning hall. There was not a smile on any of our faces. All of us consoled each other in a sporting spirit. "Take it nicely boys. Be a sport. Take it with a smiles. It is all in the fun of the game."

After dinner we assembled in the ante-room. S/L Bishop Scrong and Samie Sawyer with well decorated chests and a double line of war medals slowly moved out of the ante room. Percy Pitchies,Struts and Coulomb also

said good night and they slammed the door behind them. Now the ante room was ready for the show. Under officer Hogan produced a whip which was used for Beagling in the college. Quite politely he said "Will the Indian Cadets please jump on the table immediately in one second and give us an Indian song." In one second we jumped on the big table and sang a song. That was probably the last song I shall every sing again. It could hardly have been called a song. Anyway our voices were lound and that was what was required. "Very good- good show-well done-now jump from that table and run straight out of this room without tripping each other, you damn fellows- bog off". In a flash we ran out of the room and very nearly tripped each other in the narrow corridor. We left the entrance gate and came into the verandah. We must have a look at what is going to happen to the rest of the first term. The three cadet under officers were the masters of ceremony. We peeped through an outside window. The boys were being made to take off their clothes. Some of them had a vest and pants on, others had a vest and trouser on. "Get in the centre of the room you blighters" roared one of the under officers. "Now you are a pack of Beagles. Get down on fours and yelp as if you were runing after a hare- and if any one does not behave like a good Beagle-then I shall beat him with this whip". and he cracked his whip mighty hard. This produced a roar of laughter from all the second, third and fourth termers. Within a flash, Peele, Carnagan, Coombe, Rhys, Broughton, Michal, Gosnel, Shaw, Shore, Marchhank, Lee, O'Kelly, Leonard Williams, Dathan, Seymour, Carter, Berens, Pelly, Rolfe, and the rest were yelping like Beagles and spinning round in circleson their hands and knees. Watching this fun; even we laughed from the verandah.

Then there was a crack of the whip "Upon the beam you beggars and leave your trousers behind". Seeing poor Kiwi Broughton and Michal struggling upto the beam brought laughter alround. The beam was nearly ten feet high. There was Crack of whip again "Now you better sit properly on the beam and take that grin off your face" Now I shall place your bowler hats below the beam you jump from the beam and squash your bowler under your feet and if you miss it, you will have to climb up the

beam again and make a second jump for your bowler." Berens was the first to leap forward. A big fellow about six feet two inches, weighing about one ninety pounds. He came down on his bowler like a sack of bricks. Bowler was smashed to smithereens. This brought laughter all round from the seniors. Then one by one like monkeys they came down on their bowlers like a bolt from the blue. It was magnificent to notice that not one of our pals missed his bowler in one jump.

Suddenly Stainthurpe of the fourth terms, looked outside the window and saw us peeping in. "Bog off you" said he. "Your turn is finished. What the hell are you doing here".

So ended the beat up of our first term. We took it in good spirit and we tried to laugh it off next morning but the fact was that our morale was shaken. Kiwi Broughton had hurt a very delicate portion of his anatomy. Many of the boys had bleeding limbs and sides. We were told by the batmen that this was about the most deadly beat up they had seen in the college. Even in Bader and Coote's term, such a deadly treatment was not given. The Commandant, Air Vice Marshal Longmore was also perturbed at exceeding the limit. The beat up cannot be stopped. It is an unwritten Law of Cranwell Cadet College.

Thank you Mr. Hogan and Mr. Gaskel! One day the same unwritten law was administered by us in the fourth term under the same beam and the spot where our own term yelped as Beagles. But we only made the snookies play rugger on their hands and knees. There was no cracking of whip by Berens, and Coombe.

The beat up shook our morale so badly that we could not stand in front of even a second termer, for days. Almost every man in the college compound was 'Sir' to us. We mistook Giles one laboratory assistant for a Professor and called him 'Sir' for a few days.

O'Kelly leading a set of C. Squardron cadets gave an 'eyes right' and bang of the right foot on the ground to Sergeant Major Halford the college band master. Near the Squadron offices I gave such a smart salute to the wing Sergeant Major Joe Beresford that I almost tripped up. Two days later two representatives of the

shoe manufacturing company, Messrs Poulson and Skone came to see Bhupinder Singh in connection with an order placed through our guardian Mr. Wilkinson in London. Bhupinder made such a lavish use of the word 'Sir' that the two poor representatives of Messrs Poulson and Skone felt embarrassed. When they had gone I told Bhupinder "For Heavans sake, you don't call 'Sir' to representatives of shoe manufacturing firms'. His answer was "They all look the same to me. How the hell do I know which is Squadron Leader Bishop, Joe Beresford or Mister Skone". This fun went on for some time. We made mistakes but our friends, the British cadets also made the Same mistake as far as use of word 'Sir' went.

During the First ten days we, the snookies carried out marching on the square and arms drill in civvies. Then our uniforms were ready. One by one we tried our serge and barathea breeches and putties with tunics. Mr. Armstrong, Burberry's representative at the college was a thorough gentleman and a most polite person. Hats, tunics, flannel trousers and finally the messkit was tried on all cadets. John Merer our college Adjutant came in the mess to check. With minor Adjustments, the uniform and the mess kit was finally handed over to all of us. Cranwell mess kit was the finest dress ever invented for a Military service. One felt smart and looked smart. Breeches were also a smart, piece of uniform but those putties! Could we get them right! There should be no pockets and the seam should end at the proper place. All of us used to take about half an hour on the putties alone. Once the putties were on, these kept us warm in snow or sleets, flying, on parade or in the class room.

1st term began about the seventh of September 1930. Flying kit was issued to us almost on the same day. First Period after drill programme consisted of flying. Our 'A' Squadron set, which consisted of Berens. Peel, Gosnel, LLoyd, Rhys, Gale and myself reported to 'A' Flight for flying. We met our flight Commander, F/Lt Boyle who was extremely kind and nice to all of us. I still remember his first words "I like you Awan. I am giving you to flying officer Atcherley who will be your instructor". Outside the flight Commander's office I met F/O Atcherley already dressed up in flying kit, with his

helmet and goggles on. "Ek-Do-Tin"-he said in Hindustani. "Come on Awan- get in that Avro Lynx No. 2". By this time I was in flying kit and parachute. Two airmen helped me in the rear cockpit and tied the harness. Chocks were waved away by Atcherley. He spoke to me in the speaking tube "Keep your feet lightly on the rudder bar and your hand on the stick and feel the controls as we take off".

I had never been in an aeroplane before except a ten minute's joy ride at Delhi in a light aeroplane, when I was told not to touch anything. Sensation was that of a thrill mixed with strangeness of the subject concerned. To me it appeared that the whole aerodrome was full of aeroplanes as almost everyone was taxying out. What Atcherley did; appeared a hat trick to me. I did not feel a thing and yet I felt that with the increase of noise of the engine we had left terra firma and were rapidly climbing up. I thought that at least there should be a little struggle with the control column, rudder bar and throttle before this invention of the Human being leapt up into the air.

For a few minutes I smelt the fresh air. There was plenty of it in the Lincoln shire vale during September. After a few minutes I thought someone was talking to me. Noise of engine and flow of air in an open cockpit was such that I could with great difficulty make it out. Atcherlay was asking me if I would like to do a loop. A cadet must show keenness at all times. "Yes-Sir" was the reply not knowing what the hell it would be like. It was rather unpleasant and after doing two more I hoped that he would not do anothor one. Something much worse was coming. Suddenly I found myself upside down and hanging in the loose straps. The feeling was much more unpleasant than a loop. This was a slow roll. He did two more slow rolls and I felt really uncomfortable. My straps were loose and every time I would hang in my straps upside down. Later on I was told that aerobatics are unpleasant to all beginners. After the first twenty hours of flying one got used to aerobatics. Straps must be tightened in order not to hang in the inverted position.

Atcherley was exceedingly patient and good with

me. "Open your throttle gently- stick gently forward- now ease it back- keep her straight- don't yank her off the ground- gently back-that was a good take off." He was an instructor and an elder brother to me. If ever I made a bad landing; he would bring me back to the flight office and demonstrate a correct approach, 'S' turns, a straight glide; a gentle side slip, coming out, checking at ten feet, holding her off the ground, stick back and a good three point landing. He taught me to fly. We were a little slower than our English comrades. This was natural. Language difficulty was one of the problems. How difficult and different this language was as compared to reading a few English books in our Indian schools and colleges and when speaking to an English Instructor through the ordinary speaking Gosport tubes and in the open slip-stream of an avro Lynx trainer. At times Atcherley would begin to lose patience. "My dear boy, on days you are perfect. Everything you do is correct. Today I ask you to do a medium turn. Your bank keeps on increasing. You are slipping-in the whole time. Please hold off bank. Alright-today is a bad day. Probably you are tired. We shall try tomorrow."

Time was passing on. Our drill was really getting smart. Now we had joined up with the rest of squadrons and formed a part of the Cadet Wing on parade. F/Lt John Merer used to be present every morning during parade. He was the college adjutant. The Commandant, air Vice Marshal Longmore took the salute only once a week and then inspected the parade. A.V.M. Longmore wore his hat in a particular fashion. It always appeared that he wore his hat more towards the forehead rather than the centre of head. His red cocker spanniel was his regular companian on parade.

From the beginning of the term, Soccer, Rugger, Squash and fencing started in full swing. A regular organised game was played three times a week. I was exceedingly lucky to have got into the soccer first eleven. I had played for Government College Lahore but standard of Soccer was very high here. First eleven consisted of the following during September-December 1930. Hogan (Captain), Ling, Pearse, March-bank, Porter, Gosnel, Messenger, Baker, Burwood, Adnam, and self. Practice

game was played regularly three times a week. On Saturdays a regular fixture took us outside the territorial limits of the college. We played against Nottingham University and won. Games were played against R.A.F. training schools at Grantham and Digby. Annual Soccer fixture against the college civil staff was most interesting. Several of the batmen like Albert, Smith, and others turned out to be very good players. A game was played against the instructors also. On the opponents side Professor De La Bere performed in the goal. The game was most amusing. We won. The cadets always won against the instructors. At the end of the play, a very good tea was served in the officers mess. It was the first time that I had a chance of talking to Mrs. Bishop. She was the wife of Squadron Leader Bishop who commanded 'B' Spuadron of the Cadet wing. A good looking woman with certain amount of pride about her good looks and a definite bias against orientals. Squadron Leader Bishop had served in No. 20 Squadron R.A.F. Peshawar in the good old days. Peshawar was liked by the Englishmen. Unfortunatey a mad man running along the Mall road had thrown a stone at Mrs. Bishop. This had never gone out of her mind. Anyway she was only one out of a Million who did not like India. Every Engiish man and woman enjoyed their stay in India. They always talked openly and always admitted the nice time they had.

Our visits to Combridge University also produced good fun. One fine Saturday afternoon we were pushing off to Cambridge to play against Queen's College. When we got to Peterborough a short stop was ordered by Cadet. Hogan who was the Captain of the team. A short stop meant refreshments etc. I used to love looking at some of the nicely decorated shop windows. What a variety of goods were displayed! Hogan and Pearse went into a fruit shop in the centre of the main street, and brought some grapes etc. Pearse in a naughty mood procured a painted dummy banana hung in the centre of the fruit shop, for advertising Fife bananas. This banana was of an unusally large size; about three feet long and with a proportionate girth. Pearse and Hogan hung it at the back of the bus so that it was clearly visible to the outside through the back glass window. As the bus moved along, this Fife banana dangled side ways and up and down against the

back window. Through every town that we passed and when the bus slowed down on corners of main streets and side streets; the dangling banana produced great mirth for the onlookers. Women giggled and smiled. Men laughed aloud and pointed towards the bus. We enjoyed the fun when a party of pretty dames laughed as the bus passed through the main street of Cambridge. Pedestrians and - the street traffic laughed. Eventually a policeman's anger was invoked. Number of the bus was taken and address of Hogan and Pearse. We did not leave the banana till we reached the fencing of the College.

Next day about interval time, Wing Sergeant Major Joe Beresford came round with a chit from the adjutant's office. All cadets that went to Cambridge on the previous day to play soccer were called up by the Adjutant, F/Lt Merer. It was a clear indication of a raspberry. Team as a whole was involved and not one or two men. Apparently Cambridge police chief had telephoned to the Cadet wing about the public display of a colossal bannana by the cadets from Cranwell. It was a bad show. Raspberry was given in a very strict manner but the joke was enjoyed by Jhonny Merer also like so many others. English men and women have a terrific sense of hnmour even though ti may be slightly rude at times.

By November 1930 our standard of drill was improving considerably. Squadron drill instructors were perfect. Sergeant Major Joe Beresford was an old Guardsman. The entire pattern of our drill was shaped after the Guards. On everyday, Squadron drill was carried out by the individual Squadrons. Once a week Wing drill was carried out which was very impressive. I was in 'A' Squadron which was commanded by Flight Lieutenant Sawyer. Flying Officer Constantine was second in Command. B Squadron was commanded by Squadron Leader Bishop. Flying Officer Watt was second in Command. C Squadron was commanded by Squadron Leader Scrogg with Flying Officer Huddelstone as second in command. Wing Commander Avil. commanded the Cadet wing. Air Vice Marshal Longmore was the Commandant. Workshops were commanded by Flight Lieutenant James, popularly called Jimmy James. Workshop instructors consisted of Flight Sergeant Hammond, Sergeant Syndall

and others. Armament Section was commanded by Flight Lieutenant Sweeney. Wireless section was commanded by a very nice man whose name I have forgotten. Later on about the year 1934-35 he was killed near Poona in India in an air crash when he was commanding a flight of No. 5 Squadron R.A.F., and while carrying out army cooperation duties with the Southern Command. On the Academic side Professor De La Bere and Captain Pollock were Professors of English. Dr. Synate was Professor of Mathematics. A very nice man was our professor of Physics. I have forgotton his name as it is very difficult to remember names after twenty three years. The nick name Coulomb was handed over to us from the previous generation of cadets. Coulomb and his assistant Giles were inseparable in the Physics laboratory. Giles was a non-commissioned Assistant, but he knew a lot about Physics. In any difficult experiment, you could easily obtain help from Giles if Coulomb was not present. In fact in many a tough examination, Gile's smile solved many a problem. Then there was Dr. Pitches who was an expert at Arithmatic, Algebra and Calculas. Dr. Pitches was given the nick name 'Percy'. I do not know how 'Percy' was derived. I tried to enqurie from other English friends. Percy Pilcher was a famous French balloon expert who had carried-out an ascent in a balloon in the very early days of aviation. Our Percy was really a nice man. He had a chocolate colour lounge suite which he wore everyday for the past twenty years. With continuous work at the black board, he always had chalk marks all over his clothes. Percy never spoke. He solved a sum on the black board without uttering a word. Percy's period was always a delight. Peel and Rolfe, used to love eating monkey nuts during Percy's entanglement with the black board. Only once did I hear him say 'Stop eating' then there was a pause; and then 'those nuts'. Rolfe and Peel hid their faces.

Professor De La Bere was nick named "Bass". He was a wonderful person, very kind hearted and always eager to arrange a meet of the local-hunt club. Bass used to walk into the class room with an enormous pile of books and papers etc. One day as he opened the class room door and walked towards his raised table and chair placed at he head of the class room situated in the

old hutments; he caught his foot in the mat and fell down in a heap on the floor. Books and papers were flung in all directions. A full inkpot that he was carrying on top of the bundle, dropped on him. A new dark navy blue lounge suite that Bass had obtained from Saville Row was wet all over with ink. I have never seen anyone so quick on the uptake as John Peel who leapt forward from his desk and picked up Bass. Peel quickly dusted Bass's clothes and used a blotting paper to dry up ink on Bas's Pansy lounge suite. There was an expression of profound gratitute on Bas's face. "Thank you Peel- I don't know how to thank you It is so very nice of you Peel". No one else moved in the class room. There was complete silence. Bass was so much upset that he left the class room and closed the door behind him. For a minute there was a complete silence. Then a sudden roar of laughter. Books were thrown sky high. Berens, Rhys, Coombe, Leonard Williams screamed with laughter. "How wizard-priceless- wonderful" We did not see Bass during the week end. John Peel was a hero, and a favourite of Bass from now. Bass showed favours to Peel only. On a Saturday after noon Bass had driven his Super Limousine to the cadets hutments and asked Peel to come out to tea in the countryside and then pictures in Granthem. Some of the boys saw them going to pictures. Some of the tough boys began to pull Peel's leg. "You be careful old boy- You have nice blue eyes and a sweet girlish face-. Bass has started a liking for you". Peel almost blushed. Then there was loud laughter amongst the boys.

Bass was really a gentleman of a very aristocratic calibre. He was the best dressed man at the R.A.F. College. He rode well and possessed a Super Limousine, He was very strong in his likes and dislikes. Cadets and other officers similarly had a strong liking and disliking for Bass. In our hut, sitting round the fire after dinner and in sleeping pyjamas I said "Captain De La Bere is a very fine fellow. I go to see him in the officers quarters in connection with our essays. He is pleased with my work. He always offers me a glass of Sherry or Port. He is typically English".

Gosnel immediately butted in "You may call him typically. French-but he is certainly not typically English".

Bass took interest in cadets life as a father or uncle. In his spare time he used to watch cadets at sports, athletics, swimming or at P.T. Almost every cadet had a glass of sherry or cup of tea with him. Bass was a regular follower of Cranwell beagles. Once during a previous year when a full meet of beagles was in the process of moving off from the cadet college; some senior cadets went to Bass's room and caught hold of his very small white dog. Bass's dog was thrown in the middle of a ferocious pack of cranwell beagles. It looked like a rabbit. Beagles ran after this small rabit-like thing and chased him all over the cadet college. Bass arrived in his super limousine to see his favourite dog being wildly chased by the beagles. He was terribly upset and with great difficulty managed to save his pet.

Air Vice Marshal and Mrs. Longmore were very fond of Captain De La Bere. Two pretty dames used to visit the Cadet College quite often and were very friendly with many a good looking cadet. De La Bere did not like these dames and eventually managed to put the cadet college out of bounds for them. I had heard stories also from some friends that these dames used to invite cadets to their house very often and then play 'hide and seek and Sardines' with them, Captain De La Bere was of the opinion that when boys are learning to fly and engrossed in their studies and college work, they should not play sardines with pretty dames in the vicinity of the college. If the dames happen to have a pretty house nearby, fitted up with a swimming pool and Tennis court, surrounded by English red roses; and if a game of Sardines is played too often then the boy's mind goes off studies, parades, flying and athletics altogether. This theory was quite correct because a few cadet Romeos used to go and low fly and aerobat over the pretty damec house. Flying discipline was broken and there were one or two very serious crashes.

Many of the boys at this time of year 1930 were quiet types with a profound desire for studies, flying, drill and sports. Every useful minute was spent towards these subjects.

Cadet Prowse one term senior to ours was about the most interesting person I saw in England. He looked

older than practically all cadets at the R.A.F. College. His height was about six feet with very broad shoulders. He had a moustache. Prowse played Rugger for the cadet College and was good in putting the shot. He represented Cranwell at thetriangular meet with the Royal Military College Sandhurst and the Royal Military Academy Woolwich. He was almost an uncle type and talked to other cadets in that elderly manner. Prowse's moustache lasted only for one week. Then there was a period of ono week's clean shave after which the moustache appeared again. He had a terrific sense of humour. Prowse's uniform was always more dirty than anyother cadet. In drill he was always the right hand marker for 'A' Squadron. On one occasion when we were formed up in two lines opposite the Squadron hutment area; Prowse was asked by Leigh our under Officer, to report to the Wing Parade ground as marker for 'A' Squadron. Prowse slowly walked off with the rifle at 'Trail arms'. He was marching forward like a Guardsman. He had only taken a dozen footsteps when he paused-put his rifle on the ground and started tightening up his belt. Then he looked at us still standing 'at ease' and made a grimace which made everyone laugh. Leigh had his back towards Prowse. After two seconds, Prowse lifted the rifle, put it at the 'slope' position and started walking off in a veryslovenly manner as if he were half asleep. Every step of Prowse was full of original humour- one cannot do this type of things on parade. It was only Prowse who could do it and get away with it also. We could see Wing Sergeant Major Joe Beresford pacing up and down the parade ground. Time was getting shorter. Suddenly 'On parade' bugle was sounded. Prowse jumped up with a start almost dropping the rifle. He gripped the rifle and put it at the 'trail'- then he ran forward as if he were charging in Rugger. There was loud laughter from all of us. Leigh thundered "Stop that laughter".

Prowse's humour was so original and he spoke in such a tone that cadets laughed even when there was no reason to laugh.

One night there was a meeting of the college debating society. Many good speakers came forward. Subject was a very tough and scholarly one. A few of the

senior cadets spoke really well. Commandant Air Vice Marshal Longmore and Deputy Commandant Wing Commander Avil were present. Professor De La Bere was in the chair. Standard of speaking was really high. We six Indian cadets sat together and listened with interest. If I remember well, Peel also represented the second term and we were all very happy that a second termer did so well in competition with the senior terms. After the last speaker, Prof. De La Bere stood up and said "Gentleman, it has been extremely gratifying to note that the standard of speeches has been so very high. Before I ask Air Vice Marshal to say a few words, I would like any cadet to say something regarding the subject matter of this debate and any other points that he would desire to mention in favour of any of the speakers or against them.

Prowse was the first one to stand up. In his peculiarly humourus tone he started off telling a story that had no carthly bearing or link with the subject matter of the debate or the arguments for and against. If I remember the incident correctly Prowse related the following story;-" One fine evening in May I asked my young cousin Mary to come for a walk. We had walked far in the rolling countryside. We saw A glow worm in the mulberry bush and I asked Mary 'Shall I catch if for you Mary'. She said with a childish lisp and clasping her hands 'Oh-do-Frank' and then I saw a steam roller coming down the slope. I said to mary 'Look Marry-Steam roller!"

Prof. De La De La Bere was chairman of that debate. By now his face was changing colour, into red-pink-white-yellow-green and then red. This was quite enough. By now the library was resounding with loud laughter, from a hundred cadet. Prowse was still going on without paying the least attention to laughter. Then suddenly the senior most Under Officer from C Squadron stood up and pleaded with Prowse to discontinue his speech. Orders were out of the question as it was supposed to be a Parliamentary type of a debate. Funniest thing that I saw in the subtle humour of Prowse was that he never laughed himself. He always kept a serious face when others roared with laughter.

Only a few weeks from the end of the third term

Prowse was reported to the Squadron office for having used bad language in a public bus leaving Granthem for Cranwell. This was only as a joke with a brother cadet who was also in the same bus. As misfortune would have it, Flight Sergeant Bradburry our P.T. Instructor was in the same bus. Bradbury reported against Prowse because a few old women were in the bus. The words used were rather strong "You flaming K". With anyother Squadron Commander a probable punishment would have been 14 days 'Janks' but not with Samie Sawyer. Wing Commander Avil referred the case to the Commandant and poor Prowse dropped a term. I remember him being escorted out of the gates and fencing of the old cadet college by a party of friends. A taxi was waiting for Prowse. His spirit was still high. He waved out to everyone as the taxi took him out of the college gates.

Years have passed. I have forgotten whether Prowse came back, and joined the next term or whether he dissappeared into the wide, wide world, never to see the Air Force Uniform again. I have a recollection that he came back like Jack Bradley who was also dropped through one term for 'Bunting' a Siskin aircraft. I shall tell the story of Jack Bradley later. I wonder if ever a boy will enter the gates of the Cadet College with as much natural humour as Prowse. He just spoke or did something simple and cadets laughed.

On one occassion Bass was taking the English Class. Suddenly he drifted to the days of the War of 1914-18 when he was a Captain in the Army. Describing a scene in Germany, Bass said "Gentlemen those days were terrible, with that mud and cold and booming of guns. We lay in a flat field full of holes and what kind of holes were those gentlemen?" The class was quiet. Suddenly one hushed voice said "A holes." This was Prowse. Bass blushed. The class roared with laughter.

Academic work at the college

Professors of Maths. Physics, and applied Mechanics always were very serious. During the two years 1930-1932 I never saw Percy, Coulomb, or Struts, smile even once. Only one day at the end of the 1st term in December 1930 when we made a colossal snow ball about

four feet in diameter and rolled it inside struts lecture room, and It created a very faint smile on the face of Dr. Synate and that too for a period of one tenth of a second. Immediately he changed. "Take the snow ball out side and close the door".

On guest nights the triple kings were invited once in three months, and there also they always stuck together. In the ante room also when talking to cadets, unless a mathematical problem was discussed the Tripple kings never felt happy. But they were good souls. God Bless them!

Englishmen are always fond of sports. Triple kings sometimes used to turn up at the sports grounds. Molly Coulomb always used to accompany her father. Molly was about seventeen or eighteen. Like Joan Longmore she always came to the sports ground to see cadets play against other teams from Sandhurst Woolwich, or Cambridge etc. Both Molly and Joan were great inspiration to every cadet in the College. Joan being Commandant's daughter was more popular with the senior cadets in third and fourth terms. Molly was a darling of the 1st and second terms. On many occasions when we were down by one or two goals in Soccer or Hockey and Joan or Molly appeared on the playground- the score immediately went up in our favour due to inspiration. After the game and a hot shower when we sat in the mess for tea, one fellow asked the other- "Did you see Joan in a red coloured coat- She looked charming". "Did you also see Molly- She was cheering when we scored the second goal". "How wonderful".

Molly and Joan never came up to cadets. Only during the end of term ball, there used to be a big que for Joan and Molly in order to book a dance. I consider myself lucky that once during an end of term ball I managed to book a dance with Molly when there was a crowd of Romeos like Berens, Shaw, Gosnel, Lloyd and Rhys etc. around her. Molly was a charming girl and a great sport. She and Joan were an inspiration for all cadets.

English History and Imperial Geography

Capt. De La Bere and Capt Pollock were he two Professors. These subjects were exceedingly interesting.

I always kept the note books with me as a souvenir of the cadet college. Capt. De La Bere and Capt Pollock's encouraging remarks in red ink were so very pleasing. Tremendous amount of ground was covered in a period of two years. Note books were full with lecture material and home work. Both Professors were very interesting gentlemen. Bass took an active part in the lives of cadets in sports, riding or hunting. He was a wonderful organiser. A few good tea parties were arranged in the officers mess when cadets were also asked to join. Bass was a great favourite of the Commandant Air Vice Marshal Longmore. Bass's Super Limousine always used to be full of pretty dames whenever he came to watch a rugger or Soccer match. He must be an old man by now. He was a great man-, God bless him! Captain Pollock's lectures from Cole's imperial Geography will always be remembered.

Armament Section

Flight Lieutenant Sweeney with his blue breeches and putties strutted all over the lecture room. Workshop and the lecture room was full of coloured diagrams showing component parts of a Lewis gun, Vickers gun, 112 lb and 250 lb bombs. On the front wall were painted the following lines in bold letters.

"You may be a wonderful pilot- You may fly upside down or downside up for hours. You may get to your target. But having arrived there if you fail to shoot your adversary down-your skill as a pilot is zero".

Everywhere the same thing was painted all over the walls. It appeared that in the last war of 1914-1918, Sweeney missed a German fighter almost in a sitting position. Hence the lines all over the lecture rooms and work shops.

Besides the armament section, Sweeney took no other interest in the cadet's life. He was very fond of walking. Almost every day one could see F/Lt Sweeney with his wife in a fur coat going out for a long walk in front of the college building.

A very good looking Corporal with blue eyes and blonde hair was our instructor on the Lewis gun and bombs. He was a good shot and had competed at Bisley. Whenever the class felt bored with armament lectures

or stripping and assembling a Lewis gun, we asked the corporal to tell us how he competed in his first Bisley test. This was a good idea as an hour passed quickly. Similarly in the Engine workshops also on a cold rainy day when we did not feel like listening to instructions on a Napier Lion engine we asked Sergeant Samie Syndall to tell us how he took part in the boys boxing at Halton or the triangular atheletic meet. This would pass off an hour quite easily. But then after some time, tactless types like cadet Leonard Williams started repeating this stunt too often. Samie would quietly refuse, with the remarks "No- Jimmy James is there-He comes around snooping round the corners to find out whether I am lecturing on the Napier Lion or telling you tales of the Triangular Athletics contest".

A civilian instructor with a very strong Yorkshire accent was also an expert on armament lectures and practical firing. He was a very serious type and never told any stories like the bloude corporal with blue eyes who was always full of fun and repeated many stories about how he was riding his famous yellow Calthorpe motor bike when he saw a pretty damsel coming round the corner at Newark. Such stories are most popular with cadets of the 1st and second terms especially on occasions when a cold wintry rain can be heard on the roof of a lecture room and a frozen machine gun is lying in front of you for reassembly.

Senior cadets in the third and fourth terms preferred a little more advanced stories like taking a pretty dame for a walk through the woods during summer holidays. Generally instructors avoided stories as a comprehensive syllabus did not permit wasting a single minute. At the cadet college N.C.O. instructors were always full of fun and humour whereas commissioned officers were always more fond of showing their superiority or 'throwing a Jesus' a more popular phrase used by the cadets.

Instructors in Engineering and workshop

On the first day when we entered the workshops, F/Lt James more popularly called Jimmy James, addressed the class. Jimmy James had spent so many years at

Malta, that you could almost see the shape of the island by looking at his face. Malta in those days was a base for R.A.F. motor torpedoe boats. Jimmy was probably an expert on R.A.F. motor torpedo boats. He was very strict and always came prowling around the workshops listening into lectures and practical work being imparted to cadets by N.C.O's. Sergeant Syndall told the following story.

"In 1929; cadets Bader, Coote, Constantine, Beamish and young steve were in the senior term. One day I was lecturing to them on the valve timing of a Napier Lion engine. They were all standing round the engine in their overalls. Jimmy James came round in the usual manner, taking cover behind one engine and then another. Eventually he arrived at the Napier Lion and asked a few questions. This party of toughs were not in a fit state of mind to answer questions. Jimmy was getting annoyed with me. I saw Bader come round. He caught Jimmy at a very vital portion of the anatomy. This was all in a joke. Senior Cadets took the liberty of Cutting a joke or two especially with types who wore no wings. Jimmy screamed and asked Bader to let go. Bader refused. This state of entanglament went on for nearly two minutes. Eventually Jimmy James promised he would never come round to question the s enior term. Thereupon Bader let him go.

Flight Sergeant Hammond was another very popular N.C.O. instructor. Like Samie Syndall he was good at practical work theory and humourous stories. Without them the workshops would have been very dull indeed. All other N.C.O's were strict and never smiled, or told funny stories. On the 1st day of instruction on engines, Flight Sergeant Hammond addressed A Squadron cadets of the 1st term. "Gentlemen, examinations on my side of the workshops are pretty strict. I always judge a workman by the tool he uses. If you can lift a bucket of water with your tool; as far as I am concerned, you have passed the test in the workshop" Then he pointed to a red bucket of water for fire fighting, and howled with laughter.

In the third term F/Lt Cambell took over as

Officer-in-Charge of workshops and engineering. His lectures on claudel Hobson Carburettor and B.T.H. magnetos will never be forgotten. By the end of fourth term our note books on aero engines were full of lectures on Armstrong Whit worth-Jaguar IV c engine, which we were using in Atlas aircraft.

Instruction in Wireless:-

A very nice Flight Sergeant and a big Flight Lieutenant were the instructors. Later on this Flight Lieutenant came to India as a Flight Commander in No. 5 Squadron R.A.F. We met him at Karachi and Rawalpindi. Later he was killed near Poona in a Wapiti crash, While carrying out Air Cooperation with Poona Brigade. Wireless was rather a dull subject. Component parts of wireless sets were definitely difficult. Morse and buzzing was a regular practice. One day and as usual it would be Leonard Williams who would put his foot in the wrong place. We were not keen on appearing in a morse and buzzing test. Leonard Williams kept on pressing the key and interferred with the signals being sent by the flight Sergeant. Flight Sergeant had a *liver on* that day. The big flight Lieutenant was brought in. An imperial raspberry was administered. There was all quiet in the class room. When the period terminated Coombe and Berens as set leaders said to Leonard Williams "If you did not Tit about with that morse key-we would not have got an Imperial raspberry".

Instruction in Air Pilotage:-

Flying Officer John Norwood was our instructor upto the third and fourth term when Squadron Leader Scrogg took over. Both had an immense knowledge of air pilotage. They had attended Staff Air Navigation Courses organised by the Air Ministry. Theory and practice was really difficult. Practical test started in the later portion of the third term. I did my first Air Navigation and cross country flight with Squadron Leader Scrogg. I sat in the back seat of an Avro Lynx and talked to S/L Scrogg who was the pilot in command. We talked to each other by means of a Gosport tube. Scrogg was a very encouraging type of an instructor. How the rivers and canals looked different when you saw these on a map and then when you actually looked at them from the air under

the threat of an instructor. Whenever I saw a river marked on the map of England I always immagined it to be like the Indus or the Ganges. I argued with Scrogg about a small stream that we were crossing at a height of 3000 ft. I said it was a canal but scrogg said it was a river. We were both right because in accordance with Indian standards a stream about 100 feet wide is a canal. In accordance with the English standards, a stream 100 feet wide is a fairly big river.

Scrogg and Norwood were a wonderful combination for Air Pilotage. They were both exceedingly intelligent and considerate. S/L Scrogg took active part in the cadet life. He watched practically all big sports meetings. At Woolwich in 1931 he was almost hoarse with shouting for Cranwell during the annual games of Soccer and Rugger. Once or twice I also got a complimentary shout when making a long pass from outside right to our centre forward cadet Messenger who scored.

Drills and Parades

Arms drill and parade was a usual routine for the two years that we spent at Cranwell. Even in the first term; achievement in the standard of arms drill and parade by December 1930 was tremendous. As snookies we turned up at the parade ground in lounge suites and bowler hats. It is quite a sight to look at snookies or Rookies parading in bowler hats. Shouts of the Sergeant Major almost throws the bowler hat off your head. Luckily; Mukerjee, I and the rest of six Indian cadets were allowed to wear felt hats for the firstten days after which uniform was given. Bowler hats were trampled down on the first guest night in September 1930. Very soon we joined up with our Squadron.

In October 1930 Sir John Salmond Marshal of the Royal Air Force inspected the Cadet wing on parade. I was very lucky. Sir John Spoke to me about the North West Frontier.

Flight Lieutenant Merer was our Adjutant. He was always present at the parade ground. An exceedingly smart young man. He was an example. Parade in our days was carried out in fours and the ceremonial march past was in two rows. One does not notice the smartness

of R.A.F. cadets drill till you see a passing out parade on the screen in a British movietone, newsreel. Amarjit and I saw the first news reel at the Empire Lecester Square on 20th December 1930. At this time Hell's Angels was being shown. It was most pleasing to see the degree of smartness of the parade. Our standard compared very favourably with the Guards during trooping of colours.

Amarjit and I saw movie picture of our last passing out parade in July 1932 when we had said good bye to the dear old college.

Physical Training (P.T.)

Four times in a week P.T. classes were held in the gymnasium- Sergeant Major Bradburry, F/Sgt Curtiss and Sgt Tate were the chief performers. Sgt Tate was an amazing person at P.T. A very sbort man but he could almost do anything from a somersault to climbing a rope with the agility of a monkey. Sergeant Major Bradburry's voice echoed throughtout the gynasium "Come on gentlemen-knees up-knees-up. Elbows forward bend. Knees forward stretch-commence" after twenty three years one almost forgets the terms so very familiar.

In the fourth term, one day, Capt De La Bere Professor of English, and History came to watch us at our P.T. It was a cold wintry morning with two inches of snow lying outside between 'A' Squadron hanger and the swimming pool. We were made to take off our vests. Bare chest and only with white flannel trousers on we were doing somersaults over the gym horse. At the termination of exercise Capt. De La Bere was so full of praise. I still remember his words "Gentlemen you will never be so fit again in your life-you will remember these days when you are old". He was quite right because now at the age of forty four and in a subtropical country if I attempted to somersault over a gym horse, I would probably break my neck.

F/Sgt Curtiss with blonde hair was an amazingly good instructor. After seeing the N.C.O's at the R.A.F. College, one always agreed with an old saying that the Royal Air Force worked with the efficiency of the N.C.O's. At this place I could probably say the same for the N.C.O's of Indian Air Force and Royal Pakistan Air Force.

Flying :-

In September 1930, 'A' flight of the training Squadron consisted of about sixteen Avro Lynx aircraft. F/Lt Boyle was the flight Commander. After having drawn flying kit, helmets, goggles, Syd coat, flying gloves, flying boots etc. we reported to 'A' flight for flying instruction. I was extremely lucky to have flying officer David Atcherley as my instructor. On the first day Atcherley talked to me in broken Hindustani 'Ek-Do-Tin' This was very pleasing. After that for the first fortnight I did not know whether I was flying upside down or downside up. Atcherley took off inhis pet Avro trainer '2'. All I remember was that we went under the telegraph wires, then over the telegraph wires and into the cloud, out of cloud and upside down, and then over the aerodrome and downside up. I must admit that untill a person gets used to aerobatics; these give an unpleasant feeling. Atcherley was fond of inverted spins and bunting also. Prolonged rolls used to leave me hanging in the straps. With no experience of flying, prolonged aerobatics were getting a bit tiresome. Others were concentrating on landings and take off. Atcherley was still amused with aerobatics in trying to find out whether I could say "Ek-Do-Tin" when hanging upside down and pointing my backside towards the stars.

Suddenly the news went round that Peele in the first term had gone solo today, after completing only seven hours of dual instruction. F/Lt Boyle sent him solo on his responsibility, although the Chief Flying Instructor, Squadron Leader Thomas was not very fond of sending cadets solo after only a few hours. Peele apparently was a genius or his instructor was a super man.

On a Saturday afternoon Amarjit, Bhupinder, Mukerjee, Sirkar and I compared notes on flying. No one was near solo as yet. All I had to say was that I was not getting enough practice in landings and take off. It amused Atcherly to play hide and seek with small clouds, chase rabbits in small fields, go under the telegraph wires andmake me say 'Ek-do-Tin' when my back-side was pointing to the sky. I was getting browned off. Bhupinder was of the opinion that world's best pilots were produced when they were thrown around the sky by their instructors

like a sack of potatoes. By this time I was beginning to see light also. My contention was that a cadet should be thrown around the skies like a sack of potatoes when he has become a tough nut and a seasoned aviator but not in the preliminary stage when he does not know how his back-side suddenly begins to point towards the stars.

Atcherley believed in his own school of thought. According to him I was being turned into an Air warrior who in times to come will command the Eastern skies of South East Asia in His Majesty's Indian Air Force. I wish his dream were correct. He took a fatherly interest in me. He used to go into minute details of explaining slipping effect in a turn with the help of a model when the rate of turning and accelaration were changed due to use of top or bottom rudder in a steeply banked condition. All of us were slightly slow in picking up due to lack of technical knowledge on automobiles and aeroplanes in our country.

How I remember those kind words spoken in Gospert tube "Open your throttle. Stick forward. Keep her straight on the rudder. Ease her back-Now you are up-Turn to the left. Bank and rudder together-look before you turn" and during landing Keep her at 65-straight into wind-check her-check-her-check her. Stick right back-you have landed."

The great day came. Atcherley whispered to me in the tube. I am sending you solo after this landing. F/O Atcherley in white overalls collected his parachute from the front cock pit. Puting his foot in the step on the side of fuselage he quietly said "off you go. Solo. I will stand at the edge of the aerodrome-collect me before taxying back to the hanger".

First solo is a great thrill. A man gets a kick out of it. From that very position I turned into wind and gradually rolled forward opening the engine to full power. Take off drill was repeated religiously. That beautiful Avro trainer '2' gradually left the ground. What a thrill to watch the front cockpit empty. I turned left along the edge of the aerodrome and then turned left towards the aerodrome. I throttled right back, and commenced to glide in to land. It was one of those lucky landings which is a proverbial saying for beginners. I stopped not

very far from Atcherley, who was very pleased with my effort. He came in the front cock pit. Atcherley intended to take off when suddenly he shouted "Hells-Bells". Towards the left I saw poor Carnagan crash on his nose. Apparently he was doing his first solo also like I was. Apparently he stalled the aircraft too high and crashed on the nose. Atcherley taxied Avro '2' to an almost take of speed and then stopped near Carnagan's crash. Fire did not break out but poor Carnaghan was badly shaken. This was the last flight he ever did. Poor boy was found unfit for flying and had to leave the College. Carnagan was exceedingly clever at book work but he was unfit for flying. He was an exccedingly friendly type and was a friend of mine. I missed him so much. Twenty four years have passed I still remember Carnagan's very pleasant face and smile.

On Saturdays Bhupinder, Amarjit and I always went down to Grantham on our motor cycles. By now all the lads and lasses of the village situated on the main road to Grantham knew us. Indian cadets always got a wave of the hand in friendly salutation and a smile from the villages whenever passing through. We always replied their friendly wave and a smile. Even the bus drivers and citizens of Grantham knew us and always were nice to us. In the cafe cinema situated in the main street, special attention was given to us. I remember when Amarjit and I returned back from holidays on the French Riviera in the Summer of 1931, a beautiful girl who used to sell tickets for the cinema was overjoyed to see me back again in the Cafe cinema Grantham. There was a huge crowd of cinema goers. This girl almost came out to greet me "Where have you been my handsome boy. You look darker than before-what have you been, doing to yourself" "I have been to the French Riveira-my dear. How is Grantham?", was my reply.

Citizens of Grantham were a most pleasing lot. They were so good to all cadets. Young dames of Grantham although of a village category, are beautiful and possess a tremendous amount of sex appeal. Rigid discipline of Cranwell, where you cannot even look at a beutiful dame, leave alone taking her out for a walk and then kissing her under an oak tree, would hardly permit any cadet to talk to young dames and then make dates in the

evening for a stroll through Grantham park. Friendly reciprocity from the fair sex was all there. But one was always frightened of a Sgt. Major or a flight sergeant snoopoing around the corner. Joe Beresford and Bradburry used to come to Grantham on a quiet check up. We generally kept out of such places where authorities did not permit us to go.

In the second term which commenced in January 1931, more stress was laid on aerobatics. My favourite Avro No. 2, could perform miracles in the sky. I could only carry out loops, stalled turns, and slow rolls after a fashion, but Atcherley could make Avro No. 2 almost do anything conceivable from standing up on her tail to an inverted spin.

Not very far from the Roman road was a small forced landing ground where cadets were permitted to carry out forced landings during solo hours. Solo flying in the second term was always more enjoyable than being with an Instructor. Sometimes two or three cadets while solo, got into the forced landing ground together. On such occasions there was always a waving of hands and warm grettings, smiles and laughter.

In the third term we moved on to the service types. Armstrong Whitworth Atlas, a Siskin with a Jaguar IV C egine was a standard service training aircraft. In fact at this time i.e. September 1931 several army cooperation Squadrons in the Royal Air Force including No. 16 at Old Sarum, No. 2 at Caterick and No. 4 at Farnborough were equipped with Atlas aircraft. Similarly several fighter squadrons at Northweald, Northholt, and Tangmere still possessed Siskin aircraft. It was in 1931 that several squadrons changed over to Hawker Audaxes for army cooperation work and Furies and Bristol Buldogs for fighter work. Cranwell held on to Atlases and Siskins till we had passed out in July 1932.

By September 1931 David Atcherley was posted away. I had F/O Appleton given to me as an instructor or rather I was given to F/O Appleton as a pupil. Appleton never talked much. In fact he was probably one of those great believers in instruction through action and not speech. I only heard him say 'You take off' and then he never said a word till I had climbed to about three or

four thousand feet did a roll or a loop at will but I always found a little pressure on the controls helping me to turn over. He always had a guiding hand but he never said a word. After half an hour or forty minutes of doing whatever I pleased, I heard a gentle voice "Get in the Biff drome" Biff drome was that part of a landing ground which was used by Bristol Fighters in the old days.

I hardly saw Appleton outside in the college activities; unlike Atcherley who could always be seen in his Fiat convertable four seater saloon car with a long body gliding along the main road to Grantham. Once during holidays I bumped into him along Lady's mile at Portsmouth. Appleton would pop his head out of his office door in the hanger and tell, me 'You get into 'C' I shall be there. I would get into Atlas 'C', have it started up with a Hucks starter. Appleton would quietly get in the rear cockpit and wave the chocks away.

F/O Appleton looked sun tanned. He had probably served in Iraq or North West Frontier of India. He kept a motor car which he had probably retrieved from Noah's Arc. I owe a lot to him for being so patient and gentle with me. On Atlases he was probably one of the most skilled instructors. He gave sufficient confidence to his pupils. He never created an impression that he was helping me in a slow roll but his help used to be there whenever I wanted it.

I have a firm conviction that an Englishman is one of the world's finest instructors in flying. Same applies to academic studies also whether these are carried out at he R.A.F. college or at Oxford and Cambridge.

During later years I commanded the senior flight of No. 1 Squadron Indian Air Force in operations on the North West Frontier. Without such good instruction as that given by Atcherley and Appleton, it would have been impossible to create Indian Air Force and Royal Pakistan Air Force and further expand these to their present day strength.

Fourth term commenced in January 1931. I found myself still with F/O Appleton. Chief Flying Instructor Squadron Leader Thomas had been posted away. His place was taken up by Squadron Leader Lowe. During fourth term; stress was laid on cross country flying and

aerobatics. In order to differentiate one English town from another, one has to be a prophet or a magician. All towns look the same or at least looked the same to me at a time when I had very limited flying experience. Each town appeared to have a railway station in the middle. Each town had a church with a long spire pointing towards the sky. All houses had red roofs. There is always smoke coming out of a few high chimneys, obviously factories etc. There is always a small stream two feet by three feet winding in and out of the suburbs. There are many roads leading in and out of the town. The town is spread out equally in all directions. Centre of the town has flat roofs. In the suburbs, invariably there are slanting roof tops with red tiles.

If a man comes from India with his home at D.I.K. on the banks of the river Indus, and when he studies a map while in flight and finds a thin blue zig zag line marked as river Avon, he expects to see a river; if not eight miles, at least about a mile broad. It used to baffle me completely, When I saw a stream about twenty feet broad and six feet deep. Number of times I went away from my track and course in order to find the bed of a river and a small town. During those days radio navigation was not practised while training. It was a combination of compass, map and the watch that brought you from point A back to Cranwell.

It was a Summer afternoon when F/O Appleton told me "Here is your map. Get out to Caterick. It will take you onehour and five minutes. There is no need to refuel. Report to duty pilot and back home".

Away I went with a merry heart. It was a beautiful Summer afternoon. I climbed to the proper height and set course for Caterick. Everything went beautifully. I passed overa small town about half way. I admired a lonely church by the banks of a small stream. I passed every marked point at the proper timing. Then I saw a few aircraft flying in the vicinity of an aerodrome. Sure enough it was Caterick.

On the return journey, all went well. I passed over all points almost half way till I looked at the watch. I was supposed to pass over a small town with a church on the banks of a river. By this time wind had sprung

up and there were heavy clouds rolling along. There was no sign of the town. I looked to he right and at a distance of about 10 miles I saw a small town identically the same as the one on top of which I had flown on my way out to Caterick. There was a small church in the centre but there was no stream. Further to the right I saw identically the same town with a church and a stream in the middle of the town. I felt quite happy that I had found my track again. Clouds were gathering up to the left. I did a circle round the town and set my course for Cranwell. I had hardly checked my compass set on the course, when miles to the further right, I saw what looked like a huge town something like London. "Hell's Bells-something has gone wrong. Where on earth has such a big cityloomed up to the right. On the map on my track there is no such huge city. I must investigate by reading the name of a suburban railway station". As I flew over the town, it appeared to be nothing smaller than London, although I had never seen London from the air. Within a minute I saw a beautiful grass aerodrome with aircraft parked on the ground and a few taking off. This was good news. "I must get down and ask the name of the aerodrome and then take off for Cranwell".

Approach to land was over a few houses and chimneys. To a pupil, a new aerodrome looks very difficult for landing. Some-how I made a good landing. I taxied the aircraft towards the parking place. Couple of British airmen held on to my wing tips and helped me to park inthe line of a about a dozen Westland Wapitis. On removing my flying helmet, I asked the Airmen "What place is this"- "Castle Bromwich-city of Birimingham Auxiliary Squadron". Was the reply. "Jesus Christ"-I quietly muttered to myself- "I have almost fetched up at the North Pole in search of Cranwell".

The duty pilot sent a car to take me to Officers Mess. I was dressed in flying overalls and a Cranwell scraf. I had no tie or tunic.

I was running short of petrol, therefore refuelling had to be done. Reporting to duty pilot was also necessary. I was quite fed up with myself on having done a stupid mistake of town hunting rather than sticking to my compass course. It was tea time in the officers mess. Full

hospitality was extended to me. Officer Commanding the auxiliary Squadron had a gentle smile when talking to me "Well-young fellow-this is not bad at all. When I did my first cross country-I lost my way; landed in a field and fetched up upside down in a hedge. You are wonderful. Afterall you have located an aerodrome and have saved His Majesty's aircraft."

An hour later, the officer commanding spoke to F/O Appleton at Cranwell. "Give him petrol and the course for Cranwell- let him fly back before the sun is down" said Appleton.

I fetched up over Cranwell at sunset. How beautiful home looks to a lost bird. Only those can appreciate who have done it. I was expecting a terrific roaring up by Appleton. But I am very glad to say that he only gave a brotherly advice. "Must stick to compass course in future".

Fourthterm commenced in January 1932. Amarjit and I had spent about six weeks in Switzerland in Winter sports. As a senior most term we took tremendous amount of pride in the college and ourselves. Senior most term has many privileges. The beat up which was given to us in the first term was now given to the new junior term by us. I must admit that our cadet Under Officers Berens, Coombe and Beresford Pearse were much more considerate Than Gaskel, Hogan and the rest who gave our term the beating of our life, when we first entered Cranwell. Probably; Berens, Coombe, and Beresford Pearse remembered that imitating beagles on the carpets of the ante room was not a good thing especially when someone stands on top of your head, cracking a whip.

Orgar ised games were played regularly. Cranwell always had a good standard in soccer, Hockey, Rugby, Athletics, swimming and Tennis. It was our ambition to play against the Royal Military College Sandhurst. Fixtures were more common with the Royal Military Academy Woolwich than Sandhurst. During our time we had a better score in all games. Tennis team was captained by Amarjit Singh and Hockey by H.C. Sircar, Both Indian cadets. We won all our fixtures against Cambridge and other colleges and local teams. Standard of games was very high in England.

Advanced flying was carried out in the fourth term. Some lucky fellows moved on to Siskins. These were the future fighter boys of the R.A.F. Indian Air Force was not formed so far, so we had no other choice but to remain on Army Cooperation Air craft. Siskin pilots were having a number of crashes. Jack Bradley in our term tried to 'bunt' a Siskin. The wings came off. Jack opened his parachute and landed safely. In later years Jack did another jump at Aman bomber station in the Middle East and got away from a burning bomber. Later on, Jack met a tragic accident. He was reporting to the Medical inspection room with a slight chill when the duty driver took a bad corner and crashed into another R.A.F. transport. Jack was killed on the spot. A very fine pilot. Best in studies in our fourth term. A kind hearted boy who would have made another Trenchard of the Royal Air Force had he lived.

At the end of the term John Peele walked away with Groves Memorial prize for flying. Coombe got the sword of honour and Rhys got an academic prize. It was most commendable that Amarjit and Bhupinder Singh both competed for the flying trophy. They hoth put up a very good show and got good marks. Amarjit's inverted flying in an Atlas was applauded by every one.

Passing out parade and the last guest night at Cranwell, will always be remembered by us. On the 20th of July the gates of the old college opened for the last time for us. We said Goodbye to all including our batman Willie Dean and the college Barber Mr. Green. With a heavy heart we left the college; a place which was everything to us. Miles away from the shores of our motherland, the college provided the love and affection of a home. There was strict discipline but affection was found also within the four walls.

The train puffed out of Grantham station. We had a last look at that dear old town. The train passed along Spittlegate R.A.F. Training School for pilots. I remember the day when out of fun I did some low flying in the near vicinity of the railway station. An aircraft turned up from Spittlegate. I disappeared towards Cranwell before the instructor could take my number.

At peterborough station, Amarjit, Bhupinder and

I got down to obtain a slab of cabburry nut milk chocolate from a slot machine. We reached King's Cross railway station just before evening. We had booked accommodation at the strand Palace Hotel This hotel was always a favourite with us as it was not fright-fully expensive. There is always a crowd of foreigners in this hotel. One has a chance of meeting a countryman or a citizen from the Middle East or South East Asia.

On the first evening we were too tired to go to the pictures or a Stage show. As a new comer to London one is always lost in themultiple entertainments, shows and cinemas etc. Shopping almost turns a man crazy. There is always such a fascinating array of goods and articles and items of clothing.

On the first night we were too tired. Passing out parade produces quite a nervous strain, combined with the packing of luggage and saying good bye to friends alround. We had a hot bath. Down below in the hall there was very pleasant music. We had a soft drink and then went in for dinner. Strand Palace Hotel was famous for food. After food we listened to string music for a short time and then retired to bed. London can provide plenty of fun and dames if one looks around, but generally men from the Air Force prefer a clean healthy life and admire fun and beauty of the country from a distance.

I do not remember how long we slept. I certainly remember getting into bed. When I woke up, Amarjit was still fast asleep in the second bed. "Hai-we are at a little distance from Joe-don't you think Amar". He also woke up and murmurred "Good old Joe Beresford; God bless him. No Sergeant Major-No drill today. Whopee-Whopee!"

Now we were fully fledged Pilot officers or 'Pip O's as popularly called. There is nothing more fascinating to a Pip O as a newly earned wing pinned on to his chest and the tunic. "Amar-let us go to Burberrys and order our new blue Barathea uniform with a Pip o's thin stripe and a wing". Quickly we took a taxi and were at Burberry's Hay market. Here we found our good old friend Mr. Armstrong of Burberry's Cranwell. We were introduced to Mr. Green who promised to get down to making a new pair of Barathea breeches, slacks and tunic. New

set of putties, an officers stick and a new hat were purchased. Besides the wing, the most infatuating item of a pip O's uniform was the officer's stick. In those days all officers from the rank of a Pip O to an Air Marshal; even the Marshal of the Royal Air Force carried a Cane stick. It was approximately three feet long and was curved into a semi circular shape in the form of a grip or handle. Where senior officers gripped the stick in a proper G.S. manner and walked properly, a Pip O grabbed it from the wrong end. At any Air Force station you could make out the difference between a senior and a Pip O by the manner in which officer's stick was carried. Miles away over the horizon you could see a Pip O either swinging the stick in a vertical plane at one thousand revolutions per minute or grabbing it at the wrong end and performing a few beautiful storkes of Hockey over blades of grass as he retraced his nimble footsteps towards the officers mess. An officer's stick was a piece of ingenuity which gave the charm of a particular individuality to the Royal Air Force. It remained in fashion, till the year 1934 when probably a few fuming army Generals did not like the idea of a Pip O swinging his stick. It was stopped. A vickers gas operated machine gun could not have been so useful for the Royal Air Force as was the officer's stick.

With the first advance of pay as Pip O's in His Majesty's Indian Air Force and a money order received from home; soon the three of us, Amarjit Singh, Bhupinder, and I went round the market in search of second hand motor cars. Bhupinder bought a Fiat four seater for £80 and I bought a lovely two seater contraption for £32.

Mozaffar Kizilbash turned up from Cambridge. In a party of four we saw motor car racing and then carried out some boating in the river Thames near Staines. Evening tea in England is most enjoyable whether you drink it on a wintry evening in a restaurant or whether you drink it on a Summer's afternoon along the banks of the river Thames. Tea is a great link eventoday between India, Pakistan and England. An Englishman, Indian or a Pakistani drinks more tea than any other citizen of the world. This good habit is now popular all over the British Commonwealth.

August 1932 brought a lovely sunshine and heat wave. One morning John Dimitriadis a Greek national naturalized French, met me in the hall at Strand Palace. I asked him to accompany me to Brighton. He agreed. We drove in my two seater Fiat out of London. It was a beautiful day. John and I were together on the French Riviera at Juan-Les-Pins during July-August 1931. "How do you like the English countryside John". I asked. "It is really beautiful" was the reply.

At a little distance from Brighton, John asked me to pull up the car. I stopped. John began to unbutton his trousers on the edge of the road. "Please Pardon-I must answer the call of nature". "But John-it is illegal to answer the call of nature along a main highway". Said I "Well-it is not illegal in Greece or France. There could be no objection in England also", was his reply. Being a holiday the road was packed with fast moving cars. Many women giggled. A few old men shook their heads. But John was unperturbed.

An order was received by Air Ministry for the five Indian Pip O's to report to No. 16 A.C. Squadron old Sarum Salisbury and then enter the school of army cooperation located at the same aerodrome. Very few days were left. One day before the appointed time we left London by car. Amarjit was with me and Bhupinder drove his own car. Roads in England are very smooth and bright. These provide an incentive for fast driving.

We pulled up at the guard room old Sarum and asked for the officers mess. Outside the car park, the head waiter Alfred and a second man wished us "Good evening-gentlemen. Tea is served in the mess. Your friends Sinclair and Mackintosh are here also". Sinclair and Mackintosh was apparently the English name for Harish Sircar and Mukerjee who had reached the mess before us. Mukerjee had driven his red Rover Saloon from London to Old Sarum.

Very soon our quarters were shown to us. A very nice cup of tea was waiting for us in the ante room. If you want to taste a cup of tea you should visit officers mess No. 16 Squadron old Sarum. Although young Alfred the head waiter with his two full rows of war decorations pinned on his chest is long dead but his recipe

for tea has probably been descended down to the new generation. Alfred was knocked down by a motor car driven by F/LT Carter, a Stores Officer. Carter swore never to touch a car again. But a good man had been killed. Alfred and his Assistant waiter were two friends who will always remain in our memory. On many an occasion, at lunch time when Alfred was in a jolly mood when cutting slices of cold mutton or hamm etc. he would say to me "A little bit of Jerusalem-Sir"-and I would reply- "No thank you Alfred.- I will have some cold mutton"-then both of us would smile.

Next morning i.e. on about 16th August, Sircar, Mukerjee, Bhupinder Singh, Amarjit, and I dressed up in blue uniform reported on duty at the Adjutant's office No. 16 Squadron Old Sarum. After signing our names and the date of reporting on duty we were taken to C.O's office. Squadron Leader Churchman A.F.C. was the Commanding Officer. He was exceedingly nice to us. We were in turn introduced to Flight Commanders, F/Lt Pattison, F/Lt Bird, ad the third name which I have forgotten. Pattison commanded A flight of red nose Atlases; Bird commanded blue nose Atlases of 'c' flight and the 'B' flight consisted of yellow nose Atlases. Mukerjee and I were placed in 'A' flight. Bhupinder and Amarjit in 'B' flight and Sircar in 'C' flight.

As luck would have it, F/Lt Pattison had met Mukerjee's mother, Father and sisters in London. He was probably one of the earliest military aviators who was shot down in a De-Haviland 9A or a Bristol fighter by the tribesmen over the North West Frontier of India in 1916-18. Oil spurted all over the cock pit. Eventually he carried out a crash landing at Tank landing ground which was full of camels. He narrated that incident, number of times and told me that he was the first military Aviator who landed at the lading ground of D.I.K, my home town, in 1916.

With this interest in us, Pattison lost no time in getting an Atlas aircraft ready with ballast. Mukerjee and I got our helmets and goggles ready. The Airmen showed tremendous amount of interest in watching Indian Pip O's going up. We had to fly with them. They were keen to watch us fly. Mukerjee put up a magnificient

effort. A beautiful take off in every phase of the technique and a real good landing, with the tail well down; a three pointer according to the old technique. I was the next. A fair performance was put up. Pattison was pleased. "Very soon, probably tomorrow I shall send you with a British airman on photography and then gradually I intend to break you into puff shoots, close reconnaissance artillary reconnaissance and long range reconnaissance". When we came back for tea in the mess, there was a pat on the back from Bhupinder, Amarjit and Sircar "Well-done you two. Tomorrow we hope our flight commanders will let us go solo". Tomorrow came. Now Mukerjee and I watched Bhupinder, Amarjit and Sircar, fly service type of aircraft. Now it was our turn to given them a pat on the back. British Airmen were pleased also.

Next day it was explained to us how vertical photographs were taken for army cooperation. Pattison asked his two senior F/Os to give us the required instruction. F/O Shotter and F/O Woodhouse an Australian were exceedingly good. Soon Mukerjee and I disappeared over the Salisbury plain in different aircraft, taking vertical photographs of Stonehenge and other big objects.

After a few days, puff shoots were explained by Shotter and Woodhouse. At the aerodrome itself a very nice miniature shooting range was fixed up. Observations of the pilot were transmitted by means of tapping a morse key from a position high up at about twenty feet where a pilot's chair was fixed. Pattison himself took tremendous interest in teaching us how close reconnaissance was carried out with the use of Radio telephony and an R 31 B receiving set. Camera gun exercises were carried out on a circle placed on top of the castle in the near vicinity of the aerodrome. Now it became a daily routine to take off early in the morning towards Romsey, Portsmouth or towards Boscombe-down, Worthy-down, Yeoville etc, for the purpose of taking vertical line overlap, mosaics or long range reconnaissance. Pattison also checked up the results and gave a flight Commander's advice in correcting faults, etc.

On about the 4th of September orders were received from Air Ministry London that the five Indian Pilot

Officers will join the school of-army cooperation. A few days earlier Rhys, Gosnel, Rolfe and Lloyd our term fellows at Cranwell turned up at the officers mess old Sarum. "What the hell are you all doing at old Sarum", they said "O-we are mixed up in the army cooperation course starting on 7th September" was our reply. Rolfe was humourous as usual. Rhys had a wide grin on his face. Tea was served and we listened to the B.B.C. programme of music.

The course started in good time. F/Lt John Norwood our junior flying instructor at Cranwell and F/Lt Reed were also on the course with us. Norwood was the son of the famous Dr. Norwood Principal of Eton or Harrow Public School. At Cranwell Norwood was a flying instructor. He earned a name for using typical R.A.F. polite language in the speaking tube with O'Kelly of our term. Long ago Poor O'kelly is dead. He was killed in India during army command manoeuvres at Jhansi or Deolali in 1934. Stories of John Norwood told by O'kelly at Cranwell used to draw a loundapplause alround. Poor Rolfe was also killed in raids over Germany during the last war 1939-46.

John Norwood was supposed to have inherited intelligence from his father. He stood first in the promotion B examination for Flight Lieutenants in the year 1931. What would be our fate in the school where Johnie Norwood was a pupil in our batch also. But Johnnie used to come back from the school in an awful temper at tea time. "Can I make a damned Atlas fly in a straight line when looking through the slit of the floor and taking a vertical line overlap of a railway line". However at the end of the course Johnnie came number two. Crisham got the first place. Harish Sircar came fifth which was very creditable.

Our School was commanded by Squadron Leader Cole Hamilton. For reconnaissance, Cole Hamilton had the reputation of a Cat's eye. He was a wonderful A/C pilot. F/Lt Schofield was instructor on Artilliary cooperation. S/L Richardson popularly nicknamed King Dick was Signals instructor. On reconnaissance, F/Lt Moreten was the instructor. Flight Lieutenant wheeler instructed in photography. An army officer carried out instructional work in army liason.

Most humourous was King Dick; S/L Richardson, a man about six feet two with broad shoulders and an enormous mostache. He possessed the bearing and personality of a Roman Conquerror. King Dick had an immense sense of humour. His first lecture on role of signals in army cooperation flying was "Gentlemen-army cooperation reminds one of a fat old woman trotting around an aerodrome on a hot summer's after noon", and later he added "Many of you get hold of a microphone in the cockpit and rattle out-Yap Yap, Yap, Yap-Yap. When I was at the Air Ministry-shooting at Bisley". There was suppressed laughter alround.

On many occasions, King Dick used to go out shooting birds and grouse etc. at the aerodrome. While playing hockey, you would hear a loud report in the other corner of the aerodrome. You would see King Dick clad in a Scottish shooting hat, breeches, stockings, a gun and his favourite black labrador bitch retrieving a shot down bird. This became a favourite practice with King Dick. On all half days i.e. Wednesdays and Saturdays there would be a loud report on the horizon and almost instantaneously, the black labrador would emerge out of high grass and bushes, holding a bird in her mouth.

Wing Commander Sal was the Station Commander. He was a great sportsman and had won R.A.F. Tennis singles championship that year and the previous year i.e. 1931. King Dick was a great shot. He represented the R.A.F. in shooting at Bisley. Somehow Sal did not like Dick's shooting pastime on the aerodrome. He probably liked all the birds to keep flying like the birdmen of old Sarum. One day a station order appeared. "Shooting of birds at the aerodrodrome will cease forthwith". After this King Dick used to disappear into the countryside for shooting. On the afternoons of half days and after lunch, you would see King Dick loading up his super sports Daimler with guns and cartridges. His favourite black labrador bitch would sit by his side.

King Dick had very polished taste in life. He hated women. On many an occasion, during discussions on various topics after dinner; King Dick would speak on marriage and role of women in this life. "Take the

best looking woman. Put her in the bath tub. Take her out and then look at her. With powder, puff, rouge, lip stick and make up having disappeared, no woman is good looking. I don't like any woman" Said Dick. This teaching from an instructor who was quite advanced in age sounded a bit fnnny. On Saturdays when we went to Portsmouth or Bournmouth; Cinemas, playhouses and music halls were full of good looking women that would almost set our body and soul on fire by merely looking at them.

King Dick hated Jaz music. Younger officers from the school of army cooperation and No. 16 A.C. squadron loved Jazz music. There was a continuous tussle. Younger fellows put on a B.B.C. jazz programme King Dick would get up from the senior's corner and switch it off, He would put on some classical music, a Vienese Waltz or Rhapsody in Blue played by a continental orchestra. When King Dick moved into the dining room, a young pip O would switch on Jazz again. On many occasions King Dick darted back into the ante room and switched off the programme. In the end Pip O's were almost petrified to interfere with the music programme in the ante room. When ever we heard some woman singer from an opera with a voice that quivered as if some one was chocking her throat; all the pip O's left the ante room and marched into the billiard room.

One late night during the Xmass holidays in the year 1932 when the only occupants of the officers mess were King Dick, Amarjit Singh, and myself, as all the rest had disappeared on leave; King Dick was in a real jovial mood. We stood in front of the fire in the ante room. Outside, a cold and bitter wind howled against closed windows. Patter of rain was audible on the roof top. "Will you two have a little Burgandy wine with me" said Squadron Leader Richardson. This was too noble a gesture. It was an honour because no Pip O had upto now been offered wine by Squadron Leader Richardson. There were British and Canadian Pip O's but the honour fell to two Indians; Amarjit and myself. I think it was probably Alfred the head waiter who brought the wine. We drank each other's health. Squadron Leader

Richardson started talking on India. He mentioned that his mother or sister had spent years in India. "Come on I'll show you her paintings of scenes in India". We walked through the corridor. In Squadron Leader's room there was a most magnificent array of paintings in glass frames hung on the wall. "Look at the Taj Mahal" said Squadron Leader Richardson. Every Indian smiles with joy when he looks at a picture of Taj Mahal. And this was a most magnificient specimen; almost a museum piece. Practically all scenes were from India. A real beauty in painting and art.

We completely forgot King Dick after we left for home in February 1933. It was the year 1937 about the end of March when Mukerjee and I were getting our ceremonial uniforms ready for proceeding to London for King George VI's coronation. We were being fitted out with new uniforms at Phelps New Delhi. One evening when the fragrance of flowers floated in the spring evening of New Delhi, we decided to see a sexy leg show on the stage at the Plaza or the Odeon Cannaught Circus New Delhi. Mukerjee and I bought the tickets. In a sexy leg show if you are in the tenth or twelveth row from the stage, you are lost because you are at a little distance from what you really intend to see. With difficulty we managed to get two seats in the twelvth row. It was a variety show with cream of Indian and continental dancers. Kan Kan scene was the best. When the lights came on during interval, we noticed that three British senior officers from Air Head Quarters New Delhi were sitting in a sofa in the fourth row from the stage. Squadron Leader Richardson looked back. How he recognised Mukerjee and myself in a crowd of about two thousand brown faces? But he recognised us fully. There was a broad smile on his face as he wished us. This was a very pleasant surpirse to find Squadron Leader Richardson as a Command Signals Officer at AHQ. This was the first time after 1932 that we saw an old friend from Old Sarum.

Another friend Squadron Leader Churchman passed through Karachi in December 1935. At this time he held the rank of a Group Captain and was commanding a wing of flying boats which were on a long flight from England to Singapore. It was such a pleasant surprise to see such good friends.

With the commencement of reconnaissance at the school of army cooperation, tempo of work was increased to such a pitch that we were dead tired by evening. A cup of tea was such a relief to the stomach and tired eyes, which popped out of their sockets when flying the whole day and counting hay stacks and ponds etc. Hay stacks in practice reconnaissance were counted as enemy tanks. Ponds were counted as guns. Cows as mounted men or Cavalry, and sheep as infantry. On photographic reconnaissance we started off with vertical pin points of railway junctions, road junctions and important points like Stone-henge etc. Graudally we moved to taking vertical line over-laps from 6,000 or 7,000 feet above mean Sea level. A complete panel from underneah the floor of pilot's cock pit was removed. In the beginning it was quite a frightening psychological effect to fly around in an Atlas with the complete floor panel missing for photography. Number of maps, pencils and reconnaissance pads that Mukerjee and I lost through the open photographic panels will almost make a chart if we have to insert the dates etc.

Pilots wrre made to fly in pairs. Amarjit and Bhupinder were a reconnaissance pair. Mukerjee and I formed a pair and Sircar formed a pair with a British pilot. Within a few days raspberries started coming from all direction. Jefferson was the first one to collect an imperial raspberry. In a day's reconnaissance he failed to count enemy tanks and infantry; I mean hay stacks and sheep. Enemy gun positions, i.e. village ponds were not pin pointed. Raspberry came from the Commandant of the school, Squadron Leader Cole Hamilton. who himself was a first class reconnaissance pilot in the war of 1914-1918. We thought we could cheat in putting down fictitious positions of hay stacks and ponds but the instructors had a complete reconnaissance chart of their own. They had marked in all hay stacks and ponds. In fact a very big mosaic map taken from a height of 15,000-18000ft above Salibury plain gave them the position of all hay stacks and ponds in the country-side. At times one could cook up figures pertaining to number of cows and sheep as these are mobile and no permanent photographic map or reconnaissance chart could be kept, in the instructor's office with which to compare the trainee's

reports. However it was found that the instructors always knew the whereabouts of cows and sheep on a daily basis throughout the Salisbury plain.

Thank God that throughout the course of instruction, none of the Indian officers received a raspberry from an instructor.

One of the most difficult reconnaissance is that of artillary. A day's exercise would be to carry out four shoots with your guns located at old Sarum against enemy battery positions and enemy tanks. At least four shoots were to be carried out. If BM was the call sign of the Squadron and LK that of our guns then a specimen shoot is given below:

BM.LK.BTY 436789.436789.N1
Repeat BM.LK.BTY.436789.N1
After four minutes.

BM.LK.KT.KT —
BM.LK.OM-D6.OM.D6
After one minute.

B.M.LK. KT.KT
BM.LK.OM.C2.OM.C2.
After 30 seconds.

BM.LK.KT.KT.
BM.LK.OM.A5.OM-A5
After 30 seconds.

BM.LK. KT.KT.

BM.LK.OM.Z9.OM.Z9.
After 30 seconds.

BM.LK.KT.KT.
BM.LK.OM.OK.OM.OK.
and Instantaneously

BM.LK.OM.OK.GO.GO.

which meant carry on, your shooting is excellent and on the target (direct hits)

Essential requirements for an artillery cooperation pilot were excellent observation and speed of good morse. Another specimen reconnaissance message transmitted to the home station Old Sarum, in reporting 200 enemy covalery moving North West is reproduced below.

If BM is call sign of the Squadron and 3 is the number of the pilot, and OS is the call sign of the home station or formation, then a close recce message transmitted by the pilot by means of a T32 transmitter and a morse key is as follows.

BM.3.OS.200 Cav. mg.NW.639208. 639208.N2

BM.3.OS.200 Cav. mg.N.W.639208.N2

Every day's exercises were a test of the pilot's capability for army cooperation. In the photographic reconnaissance, marks were given for every exercise. One of the most difficult was mosaic photography covering an area 10 miles by 6 miles. Focal length of the lens was given and the scale of photographs was given. With the help of simple formulae, a pilot was to calculate the height, number of runs, and number of exposures in each run. Calculations had to be shown to F/LT Wheeler our photography instructor. Each run had to be marked on a one inch map. Each starting point had to be marked. You were lucky if a well defined starting point was located on a one inch map e.g. intersection of roads or railways, a hut or a cottage etc. etc. But towards the advanced stages since realistic enemy positions had to be spotted in the photographs an area totally in the open was selected by Wheeler. For half an hour one would go round and round in an Atlas aircraft at a proper height in order to locate a bush or a white patch which would be one of the starting points of a run. With the calculations and a plotted and lined map in hand I had devised a method of flying along the base line of a rectangular piece of land which had to be photographed in the shape of a mosaic with 30% overlap fore and aft and 65% overlap laterally. Along the base line, starting points had to be spotted and remembered. Once this was done I would shout to my pal in the back seat "Get ready Mukerjee here we go" and he would go flat on the floor of the back cockpit manipulating the camera. Electrically operated and automatic cameras had not come into use. These were still in the experimental stage at Farnborough. The camera had to be clicked by hand and then rewound for the next exposure. Through the Gosport tube I would shout "On the first run-commence" Mukerjee would be flat on the floor of the cockpit clicking away the camera

for each exposure; pressing the stopwatch for each time interval and at the same time keeping a mental record of the number of exposures taken in each run.

There was a time limit fixed for each exercise. It was an hour and a half for each pilot. At the termination of an exercise Mukerjee and I changed seats in the aircraft. I became the observer who had to manipulate the camera. On many occasions we returned back late at tea time; our faces red and blue with frost bite due to open cockpits, open floors and no electric heaters fitted to aircraft of those days. On several occasions the camera froze.

In the advanced exercises, road and railway long distance reconnaissance had to be carried out. In our days taking off from Old Sarum and counting of rolling stock and ships at Portsmouth was supposed to be a long distance reconnaissance. With Atlas aircraft cruising at 95 M.P.H., counting of motor vehicles along the road to Yeoville was also supposed to be a long distance reconnaissance. First day I took a photograph of Westland's aerodrome at Yeoville; I was really happy because Yeoville was the home of all Westland Wapiti aircraft that were taking part in the operations on the North West Frontier of India. It was a clean and neat a aerodrome with a grass field in the middle. There was a white circle with Yeoville written in the middle. The factory appeared to be spread out over a wide area.

Squadron Leader Cole Hamilton never interfered with the trainees in the advanced stages. One morning about the end of November 1932 we were walking up to the lecture rooms. There was no flying as a blanket of thick fog lay over the aerodrome. Out of the blue an Atlas appeared above the aerodrome. She made a low approach in between the school hanger and No. 16 Squadron hanger. A beautiful landing was executed. We all approached the edge of the aerodrome to find out who the pilot was. Squadron Leader Cole Hamilton came out of the aircraft after it was parked.

Saturday is the most enjoyable day in England. Everything stops at midday. Invariably there was a game of Hockey against a visiting R.A.F. team. In the station team, Sircar, Amarjit and I were included. Sircar played at Centre half, Amarjit played left inside and I

played outside right. We never lost a game for a long time. F/Lt Wheeler played in the centre forward position. He was one of the best hockey players that I saw in England. His game was very clean and fast. He was a wizard and a goal getter. Once wheeler had the ball, it was almost impossible for anyone to get it till it hit the boards of the goal. In the senior R.A.F. championship we almost got to the finals. Only against Boscombe Down we lost due to a very scruffy and rough game. Their half backs marked wheeler so much that he could not move forward. As luck would have it, it was a rainy day and the ground was very soft. Ball just would not travel. When we left Old Sarum in February 1933 a very clean record of Hockey was left behind.

After tea on Saturdays we always used Amarjit's car for a trip to Bournmouth. Seven O'clock cinema show would be the first entertainment and then dinner at one of the restaurants. When I first went to England I could not get used to western music. After three years stay in England, one day I played a few Indian records on Mukerjee's gramaphone. The sound was so unpleasant and not understandable that I threw all the records out of the window. String music in English restaurants is captivating. La Paloma and Destiny played at Bournmouth restaurants haunted us for years when we came back home to Karachi and Peshawar.

English roads are delightful. The surface is very smooth and garages are available at short distances where technical help can be obtained in the case of a breakdown. Luckily we never had a breakdown.

During Xmas 1932, Amarjit, Bhupinder and Mukerjee went away to London for four day's leave. Many of the British officers had gone to their homes in the countryside. Sircar and I were left behind. We decided to go out to Bournmouth and spend Xmas eve there. We reached Bournmouth rather early. A very hectic time was spent in seeing two cinema shows, one variety show and a late dinner. By twelve o'clock we realized that Amarjit's car was not there and the last bus left at 12.15 midnight. We literally ran in the street to catch the last double decker. Being X mas eve, the bus was a little empty. Sircar and I were so tired that we

stretched ourselves across the seat and almost went to sleep. In the meantime a party of British airmen from Old Sarum came in the bus. Seeing us fast asleep in the bus they imagined that on X mas eve we had been beating it up and were knocked out due to alchohol. There was loud laughter. We both woke up to recognise our own friendly British airmen from the home station. "Did you have a good time Sir ? Lot of dames around Bournmouth" they said. We smiled and replied "Yes-thank you. Bournmouth is a lovely place. We are very tired due to rushing around the whole day".

By the end of Xmas 1932, results of the course were declared. Flight Lieutenant Crisham stood first. Johnie Norwood was third and Sircar was fifth on the course. We all got good marks and passed. We were vory thankful that we had passed and never got a raspberry from the Commandant, Squadron Leader Cole Hamilton. F/O Jefferson was the first to get an imperial raspberry. Even Flight Lieutenant Reed who was the senior most officer on the course got a mild raspberry one day.

Results were sent to Air Ministry. Orders were received that the five Indian Pilot Officers will be posted back to No. 16. A.C. Squadron Old Sarum with a view to polishing up army cooperation procedures and before returning to India to form nucleus of the Indian Air Force.

This was grand news. Another two months to be with a beautiful Squadron, a loveable flight Commander (Pattison) and a charming Squadron Commander (Churchman). Pilots room was once again crowded with Rhys, Gosnel, Rolfe, O'Kelly, Crossman, Dwyer, Zippy Zawn, Jumbo Moreton, Amarjit, Bhupinder, Mukerjee, Sircar and myself. A roaring fire was kept Burning. December and January can be quite cold in the Salisbury plain. Often there was a call from the flight Commander. So and so wanted for Camera gun practise on the castle. So and so wanted for photographic reconnaissance. So and so wanted for Artillery cooperation. So and so, please drop, photographs at Tid-worth. Often the door would open as a frozen pilot would enter the pilot's room after completion of an exercise and would make a dash for the fire place--"By God at 14,000 ft I was frozen." was a very popular exclamation repeated so often.

Once a month there was a Squadron formation practice. On one occasion in August 1932 the Squadron Commander sent for me. When I got to the office I sprang to attention, and saulted smartly. I found Squadron Leader Churchman surrounded by Flight Lieutenants Pattison, Bird and all the other senior F/O's including Shotter, Woodhouse etc. etc. "We are going on a trip over the sea-would you like to see some mermaids". The question was so highly involved that I nodded "Yes-thank you sir" without asking what the tactical problem involved. Actually it was an official or unofficial reconnaissance by the whole squadron over the bay of Weymouth with a view to locating the French luxury liner La Atlantique which had caught fire on her trip across the Atlantic from the west to the east. It was being towed by tugs into the Weymouth bay. No. 16 Squadron after locating its exact position and reporting it to base by Wireless were to carry out tight squadron formation practice and low flying over the sea.

This was the period of a heat wave in August 1932. Beaches along the south of England were crowded with bathers. This is exactly what he meant when Squadron Leader Churchman said "Would you like to see some mermaids" I was under the impression that some real mermaids had been spotted in the sea along the beaches, and an aerial photograph had to be taken like the fantastic case of the lochness monster, about which we heard on the radio everyday.

The squadron taxied up to the corner of the aerodrome and got into a Vic position for take off. I was nowhere in that tight formation of senior F/o's, flight commanders and Squadron Commander. We searched over the bay of Weymouth for half an hour. There was no trace of the French luxury liner. It had in fact been towed to the French coast. On our return trip, magnificient flying was done along the beach at Bournmouth. It was packed with mermaids. (I fully understand the term now. English not being my native language).

For the purpose of writing this book, I may state that no breach of flying regulations was done. No hazard was created to the public. Squadron Commander kept the formation at a safe distance to sea. Thousands of

mermaids waved their hands. English race is wonderful. They love a thrill. Their sea side resorts are wonderful the memory of No. 16 A.C. Squadron will always remain fresh in the hearts of Indian and Pakistani Military aviators.

On new year's eve with all its happiness and glory; a station dinner and dance was arranged. Mrs. Churchman, Mrs. Pattison, and Mrs. Bird excelled in hospitality and entertainment for all' officers. Usual station custom was that the seniormost officer's wife fried eggs and bacon on the fire in the ante room after 2.A.M. New year was brought in with all the pomp and glory. Alfred,the head waiter brought a frying pan and sufficient quantity of frying material. Excellent eggs and bacon were prepared. Mrs. Churchman proved that an Englishwoman was not only beautiful and graceful when moving in society but was also a magnificient housewife. Never have I enjoyed fried eggs so much as those prepared by Mrs. Churchman at 2.A.M. on 1st January 1933.

About the middle of Jnauary we were asked to watch a prearranged artilliary shoot at the Artillary school Larkhill. F/O Woodhouse was in the air. A detachment of R.A.F. signalsmen sat in the field with their T32 transmitters and receivers. The guns responded beautifully. Everytime, K. Toc was received from the pilot, the guns boomed. Shell bursts were easily seen. My own impression was that it was better fun to watch shell bursts from the air when you are flying and observing for the artillary yourself than to stand on the ground where you merely see a puff of smoke over the horizon.

At the end of January 1933 a dance was held at the Sergeants mess. Generally it was a custom that the officer commanding detailed one or two senior officers to go to the Sergeant,s dance. Generally these were of the rank of a senior flight commnder who was always accompanied by his charming wife. Pip O's were not permitted by the C.O, of the station as they generally made a nuisance of themselves by drinking all the Sergeant's whisky and in the end walking away with all the Sergeants girl friends. This type of thing is not liked in bomber or fighter stations where many of the sergeants wear wings and are just as good pilots as any of the

Pip O's. On an army cooperation station this type of jealousy dose not arise as no Sergeant wears a pair of wings for the simple reason that artillery and army formations on the ground would not obey a word of command in connection with opening of artillery fire etc., when a message is transmitted by radio telegraphy or speech by any pilot,unless he holds a King's Commission. On this occasion the sergeants were really noble. They sent an open invitation to the officers mess for all officers, married or bachelor.

Quite a number of Pip O's were getting ready to go to this dance. Station orders were quite strict. On such occasions the station Commander had permitted officers to have a drink or two with the Sergeants in order to create a sense of comradeship and appreciation of hospitality which is found in abundance at the Sergeant's mess. But officers were not permitted to make a nuisance of themselves by accepting too many drinks·

I had almost forgotten that many of my friends were going to this dance. After dinner I had made myself comfortable in a sofa chair. I managed to get a copy of the latest addition of Tatler. B. B. C.s programme of Jazz was magnificient. Incidentally Squadron Leader Richardson was out otherwise this programme would not have lasted long. One of the senior English F/O's of B flight asked me. I have forgotten his name as twenty one years have gone bye. "Would you care to come to this dance at the Sergeant's mess". The idea was wonderfull "O. K- thanks-yes, lat me get my great coat and gloves". His car was outside the mess. We drove for a couple of minutes and were at the Sergeants mess. The station band was playing some good tunes. There was a terrific gathering of Sergeants and their girl friends. As usual; in an English dance hall there are always more girls than boys. Here also nearly three quarters of the dance hall was full of girls. Some of them were very smartly dressed; others looked like plain Janes from the countryside. But they all looked to me as most beautiful. At the age of twenty when you fly the whole day and spend the rest of your time in playing hockey within the boundary of your aerodrome' a woman in a dance hall, of average looks, appeared as bewitching as Marlyn Monroe. If I had to be at the Sergeant's

mess now at the age of forty three, I probably would not be so much bedazzled.

On entering the dance hall I saw my flight Commadder and Mrs. Pattison standing in a corner of the dance hall. To a pilot officer if there is a God and a Godess on earth or in the skies, it is his flight Commander and his Mrs. I approoehed them with the reverence of a pilgrim on his way to Jeddah. I sprang to attintion in my mess kit and bowed to Flight Lieutenant Pattison "Good evening-Sir". and then I bowed to Mrs. Pattison "Good evening, Mrs,Pattison". She was so happy. A radiant smile lit her face. "Good evening- there are lot of pretty girls. I hope you are not led away". she said.

The music was bewitching. My English friend introduced me to two young sisters. He knew them very well. He lost no time in asking one for a dance. I was a bit shy and sat down, with the younger sister. They were both very good looking and young. The yonnger one looked so innocent. She was not a day more then sixteen years. She was exceedingly fair and had blue eyes.

My flight Sergeant came up. "Come on Sir. I will introduce you to my wife and daughter". They were extremely pleasant. I was introduced from one friend to another. Only yesterday we had played in the semi finals of the senior R.A.F. Hockey championship and beat No.1 Squadron R.A.F. Tangmere with Ling, Drew, Worrall and all the other exCranwell stars playing for them. We were local heroes as fer as Hockey went.

This young girl frequently smiled at me "How old are you "she asked. "I am pretty old-about twenty " said I. "How old are you" "I am pretty old -Sixteen" she replied. "After the dance, our fiend is taking my sisterhome. Will you come also and take me home. We shall sit in the back seat". She said sweetly to me.

Coming from the wild wilderness of the North West Frontier I had no ieea of these gentle tactics practised in England by young boys and girls in taking them back home in a motor car by a country lane on the banks of the river Avon. "Yes, my dear" I replied. "If my Englsh friend has already pre-arranged a moonlight drive by the river Avon, I shall be delighted". But I had no idea of the customs and etiquette practised by boys and

girls in England. Now at the age of forty three after having wandered over the whole of America, Canada, France, Switzerland, and Australia I know that so long as boys are boys and girls are girls; customs and procedures of etiquette remain the same whether you are in Los Angles, Sydney, Montreal, Salisbury or my home town D.I.K, by the banks of the river Indus.

I was exceedingly shy. In this girl's company there was cold sweat coming out of my forehead and palms of hands. She kept looking at my face and I did not know what to do.

Mrs. Pattison saw me and offered to drop me at the Officers Mess. If a man has ever refused a Godess, it was I. I was magnetised in this girl's company. Eventually time came when the band played "God save the King". We all stood to attention. Then my English friend came up to me, "Come on boy we have to take these two girls home".

We put on our great coats. The girls came out of the ladies cloak room. My friend had brought up his car. The elder sister got in front. I sat in the rear seat with the younger sister. We came up along the castle and then took a country road by the river Avon. A cold wintry moon-light streamed through the glass panes of the car. At a selected spot my friend pulled up the car to see the reflection of the moon in the waters of the river. The elder sister was so much worked up with emotion that she threw her arms round my friends neck and kissed him. In a second they burried their faces into a long long kiss. The younger sister looked up towards the moon. Her big blue eyes almost had the picture of the moon in them. She slowly turned her face towards me staring me straight in the face with those lovely blue eyes. Not knowing the English custom, I like a fool did nothing at all the whole way to their house when we wished them good night. I never had a chance of meeting this lovely girl again who lived on the outskirts of Salisbury town. We were to leave for home in February.

Daily flying practice was maintained throughout. Squadron Leader Churchman mentioned one day "I wish you fellows were to remain with us till May or June. Armament training camp comes off in May. The whole

Squadron will proceed to North Coates Fittes. It is definitely good fun. Then in June, Army Command manoeuvres will oommence on the Salisbury plain. Cooperating with a Tank Division and with the Artillery is real good fun. You would like it so much".

By this time orders were received from Air Ministry that the five Indian officers will leave for India by the end of February. Eventually orders arrived giving the name of ship. "S.S. Tuscania" to sail from Liverpool about the first week of March 1933.

Amarjit, Bhupinder, Sircar and Mukerjee had left for London a few days earlier. At the end of February 1933; the day I left Old Sarum there was a heavy snow storm. Salisbury plain had probably never seen so much snow during the past one hundred years. At the railway station I found that all trains were off schedule. I spent a very uncomfortable two hours in the waiting room. Even a hot cup of tea could not be obtained. The room was being lashed with the fury of the storm. I was very glad that I had said Good bye to Squadron Leader and Mrs. Churchman on the previous day. Also I had said goodbye to all friends including Flight Lieutenant and Mrs. Pattison, Flight Lieutenant Bird, Squadron Leader Richardson and all the comrades of No. 16 A.C. Squadron and school of army cooperation. I had done my best to shake hands and say goodbye to the Squadron Warrant Officer, flight Sergeants. N.C.O.'s and British Airmen. They were such good comrades. I was sorry to say goodbye to the Airmen who looked after my machine in 'A' flight. They used to start her up for me when on a long reconnaissance or photographic flight. We cleaned her up together and made her sparkle when Air Vice Marshal Longmore our Commandant at Cranwell came for an inspection when he took over his new Command of Salisbury area. He was so pleased to see us standing to attention next to our beautiful aircraft. "Awan-are you happy. that you are going back home to India? Will you think of us? said he and I replied "Yes Sir-we will always remember you all. We have had such a good time here and we have learnt so much".

Right the way to London I was frozen. Snow was still falling and the sky was grey and dark. I thought

of A.C. 2 Triss my batman. Good fellow. I gave him only 1£ before leaving. I wish I had more. But the pay of a poor pilot officer was only 30£ a month. And I had a long way to go home to the. North West Frontier of India. Triss was an A. C2 in the R.A.F. He was so very punctual in waking me up in the morning and lighting up a fire in my room in the evening. He cleaned the tunic and sent clothes to the laundry. He made my bed and his duty was completed. Triss was good at Footbal or Soccer. I shall always remember him. In fact, now, writing these lines after twenty one years, image of Triss is in front of my eyes. Willie Dean was my batman at Cranwell, for two years. I shall always remember young Willie also. Without him I could never have been smart on parade. Willie always checked us before sending us on parade. 'Put your hat straight. You have a small hole in your putties. You are sure to be on the Jankers unless you do up your putties again". He used to say. Thanks to Willie, I never got Jankers or extra parade due to bad turn out. Willie has kept up a very good record. He is still in the civilstaff at Cranwell, after so many years since 1930. A young pakistani boy just returned back from Cranwell said "Willie is still there and he still remembers you so much".

When I reached London, I took a taxi for Strand Palace hotel. On enquiring I found that Amarjit and Bhupinder were already there. What fun! a hot bath, dinner, and we were in Piccadilly circus seeing a cinema show at the Empire Liecester Square.

We obtained a few items of tropical uniform from Burberry's. Hay Market. Our friends Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Green advised that many items were a G.S. issue. It would be better to obtain these from an R.A.F. Squadron stores in India. We called at the Air Ministry and obtained our embarkation orders. All papers were made ready. About the first week of March 1933 we all met in London and took a train for Liverpool where we had to board Anchor Line's S.S. Tuscania. When we reached the ship we found our cabins. We found that a very big crowd of old term fellows from Cranwell were being posted to R.A.F. Stations in the middle East and India. P/O Jack Bradley was posted to Amman. P/O Leonard Williams and Evans were going to Egypt,

probably Abu Kir or Abu Suir. P/O Rhys, Gosnell, Rolfe, LLoyd and Lee, were going to Nos. 5 and 31 Squadrons Quetta. What a party! Slowly the ship slided out of the docks. Gradually we were picking up speed. Soon a few tall buildings, chimneys and a big clock tower appeared receding away over the horizon. It was a civilian ship. We were permitted to wear civilian clothes throughout the day and during evening also.

Bay of Biscay was stormy as usual. In the Mediterranean, a sports committee was formed, and a small tournament was organised. By the time we reached Port Said, finals were being played. I won Deck Tennis singles and mixed doubles with an English girl. Amarjit won deck coits. Sircar and Bhupinder also won some items. This was a good show for the Indian Air Force to have started off sports so well from the beginning.

At Liverpool, amongst the senior officers we noticed a small sized flight lieutenant. His face had a dark colour for an Englishman. He always wore a blue uniform, but on the first day that I saw him he had no wings on his tunic. We were only a few hours from Liverpool when Sircar came up with a story that the small dark Englishman with no wings on the uniform is our future flight Commander in India. "But don't be funny Harish" said I "The man wears no wings. How can he be our flight Commander with no wings? I consider myself cat's pants after flying around and juggling with Jesus for three years over the Lincolonshire vale and Salisbury plain. I am not going to follow a man with no wings"

Early next evening we saw the same British Flight Lieutenant with a very smart blue uniform, a lovely pair of wings with two rows of war decorations including D.F.C.,A.F.C. and a Polish and French Cross. "Jesus Christ. Have you seen that ?" said Amarjit to me. "If he is our flight Commander; we have the honour of being commanded by the best decorated man in the British Isles".

"My name is Bouchier, gentlemen. I have been appointed by the Government of India to form the

nucleus of the Indian Air Force at Karachi-Drigh Road", said he as Sircar introduced us all to Flight Lieutenant Bouchier.

"Come on gentlemen. Let us sit down here. What will you have to drink? Let us drink to the formation and success of the Indian Air Force" said he. Drinks were ordered. "Raise your glasses-gentlemen" and we all stood up--"Indian Air Force-here's to the Indian Air Force" glasses were touched and we all drank to the success of the Indian Air Force.

Bouchier continued "Gentlemen, do not be disappointed when you arrive at Drigh Road. A small nucleus has been started. Four Westland Wapiti aircraft have been allocated by Air Head Quarters, but I have managed to wheel in only one from the Depot, because daily flying and maintenance is a nuisance unless you have the pilots and airmen. K 1290 is there in our hanger. I have flown her several times. She is a darling. I shall take delivery of K1291 and K1260 and K1297 when you all come back after leave from your home towns. I had a little botheration with the airmen. Their conditions of pay and allowances were not good. Many of them left. A few are there and they are really good. Keshu, Ram Singh, Harjinder Singh, Nair etc. are there. They are still under training. We have to depend upon British N.C.O's and Airmen who have been attached to the nucleus of 'A' flight No. 1 Squadron, Indian Air Force. Warrant Officers Newing and Harper, Flight Sergeants Hill, Furlong, Groom and Corporal Sherman, Brennen; Lac Gilholly etc, are doing a wonderful job of work in training up your men. We are stationed at the R.A.F. Depot Karachi Drigh Road. I personally asked A.H.Q. to start the flight there as Peshawar, Kohat, Risalpur, Quetta and Ambala are operational stations. There is no point starting a new show at operational stations where pilots have years of bombing and firing experience on the North West Frontier. Wing Commander Whitelock is the officer Commanding at Drigh Road. He was a schoolmaster before he joined up as a pilot in the war of 1914-1918. At times he still behaves like a school master, but you should not mind these things. Air Marshal Sir John Steele is the Air Officer Commanding Air Forces in India. He

is exceedingly strict. We are getting late for dinner. Let us go".

Bouchier started taking interest in us right from the beginning. In the beginning he did not impress me very much. I was expecting my flight Commander to be at least over six feet in height with every possible war decoration on his chest. Later I began to love this man as he proved himself to be a great leader.

'Boy' bouchier as popularly nicknamed by his collegues and comrades in the war of 1914-1918 had all the decorations. Although he was small, yet he was exceedingly active and was the best Tennis, Squash and golf player at the R.A.F. Depot Drigh Road Karachi. He used to play cricket also and was fairly good at the game.

Very soon we nick named Boy Bouchier as "Bouchie boy' We were getting to like him. He always had a very pleasing smile. When laughing, Bouchie's face used to be lit up all over. His was the most hearty, cordial and a pleasant laugh that we could hear anywhere in the Air Force, except his friend Silvo Silvester who used to make the officers mess resound with his laughter at Drigh Road.

Boy was bit of a lad also when the moon light came over the Mediterranean. But he was a thorough gentleman. He was always exceedingly popular with dames. His smile won him all the popularity.

When we reached Bombay; Bouchier informed us to proceed on one month's leave. Amarjit, Bhupinder and I took the evening mail train for home. Sircar and Mukerjee stayed behind at Bombay. After an absence of three years, things looked so strange to us. We still could not get over our first sight at Ballard Pier, when early in the morning we saw a man beating up a cooly on the gangway with a stick. Than our railway stations were so dirty and disorganised. General poverty was noticeable wherever we went. We were so fond of returning back to the motherland that we took no care and ate whatever came our way. Amarjit and I took cold drinks and ate some coconut sweetmeats on the beach. The result was obvious. When the Frontier mail left Bombay; I was developing fever. By nightfall, I was almost unconscious.

My temperatur lasted till we came to Delhi where Amarjit's brother Partap Sing and his mother and sisters had come up to receive him. I was given a good welcome at Lahore station. Both my brothers who were studying at Govt. College Lahore had come to receive me. After a few day's stay at Lahore I proceeded to my home town D. I. K. in the North West Frontier.

After a month's holiday I received a letter from Mukerjee. He had written that we should all arrange to catch Karachi mail from Lahore on 10th May 1933. Everything was arranged. We all met at he railway station Lahore. It was very pleasing to find that Mukerjee had a big stock of oranges pleaced on the ice in his comartment. In the heat and dust of Khanewal-Lodhran-Samasatta, we found these oranges most delicious. We all asked each other "At Drigh Road-what has Bouchier rigged up for us. Probably a flight of Bristol fighters or Westland Wapiti aircraft or probably nothing at all". We all hoped to see at least four wapitis and about one hundred Indian airmen smartly standing to attention in front of the hanger.

Early in the morning the train was nearing Dhabejee railway station about twenty miles East of Drigh Road. The atmosphere appeared clean and free of dust particles. This was due to nearness of sea. A wapiti aircraft appeared over the horizon and proceeded to beat up the train. It was a wonderful piece of low flying exhibition. Aircraft had skyblue cheques on the side of the fuselage and on top of the wings. Little did we realize that this was K1290 Bouchie' s golden eagle being flown by F/O Peter Broad who was the senior British Officer attached to 'A' flight No.1 Squadron I. A. F.

Tandon our Stores Officer met us half way to the Cantonment railway station. He had brought a heavy truck to collect our kit. When we got to the mess we met Peter Broad and F/LT Bouchier, who enquired about the journey. Bhupinder like a B.F, mentioned about an aircraft with black and light blue cheques crrying out a wonderful piece of low flyiug. Such things pleased Bhupinder immensely. Bouchie's face became red and Peter Broad's face showed signs of worry. Bouchier was always very strict on flying discipline. Low flying annoyed him immensely.

We were shown our newly constructed quarters adjascent to the officers mess. Titch Tandon was already living in one of them. These quarters, six in number were specially constructed for the first batch of Indian Officers. The quarters were immediately named Gandhi hill by us. These are still in existance after twenty years when I am writing this book. These provided a home for us and other flights of the Indian Air Force after we had moved up north to the Frontier on 1st April 1936.

We had breakfast in the officer's mess. Karachi was an R.A.F. Depot those days. Most of the officers were either engineers or belonged to the Stores Department. Some were test pilots for the overhauled aircraft. Outstanding amongst these was F/LT Silvester, Bouchie's friend of the last war 1914-1918. He was nick named Silvo. Then there was Jeff Tuttle, Adams, Percy Pratt, Elias, Shaw, Stokes and Blockey. Wing Commander Williams, was the chief Stores Officer. DOC Lee and Carslaw looked after the sick and wounded. Squadron Leader Norton was the Chief Technical Officer. Squadron Leader Bingo Brown was the Chief Administrative Officer, T. Bruce was the station adjutant and Wing Commander Whitelock commonly called young Willie was the Station Commander.

Peter Broad took us to the station tailor for making a few pairs of Khaki shorts and shirts, tunic, and a pair of breeches and puttees. Ceremonial dress was breeches and putties upto the rank of a flight lieutenant, and long black boots from Squadron Leader's upwards. On the entire station only Bingo Brown and young Willie wore long black boots on the occasion of King's birthday parade or visit of A.O.C. Everyone else wore breeches and putties.

We obtained tropical pith hats from the Stores. Within a few days we were equipped with tropical uniforms.

When we came to the I.A.F. hanger which was on the other side of Silvo's T. and D (Test and despatch) flight, we saw what constituted the Indian Air Force. Bouchie's golden eagle Wapiti K1290 stood in a corner of the hanger. The rest of the hanger was a huge vacant space. Ghisa the sweeper was handling a huge broom and was busy in sweeping the floor. In a corner of the

hanger Hawai sepoys Harjinder Singh, Ram Singh, Keshu Mitra and Sharma stood near a bench carrying out some splicing and cleaning of a contact breaker assembly unit of a Bristol 8F engine. In another coorner of the aerodrome a British N.C.O, flight Sergeant Groom was busy with Hawai sepoy Ranjit Singh in dismantling a T32 radio set.

Bouchie introduced us to the British instructors; Warrant Officer Newing, Flight Sergeant Hill, Sergeant Furlong, Flight Sergeant Parson, Flight Sergeant Groom, Corporal Sherman, Corporal Brennon, Corporal Read and LAC Gilhooley. There were more British instructors than the Indian Airmen. In fact the entire work of keeping one aeroplane service able was being done by the British Airmen. Keshu, Ram Singh and Harjinder Singh were still under training and not permitted to sign for aircraft serviceability. A very large number of airmen under training had left due to unattractive pay scales and conditions of service.

A room was given to us as pilot's room. As we moved into this, all of us had our heads hanging down. Disappointment was written on everyone's face. "Jesus Christ'! we shall never be able to form the Indian Air Force." 'Jesus Christ' was a good phraseology we had learnt in England. Then suddenly Bhupinder spoke. "The only one who is doing some work is Ghisa the sweeper. The rest is all Shambles. Bloody Air Headquarters have been asleep, When we were training for the last three years in England."

We came back at lunch time but our appetite had disappeared due to disappointment. Next morning Bouchie tackled us in a very tactful manner. "Don't be disappointed. After all, Rome was not built in a day. It takes some time to build up an Air Force. How long did it take us to make the Royal Flying Corps? Do not worry. I have asked Silvo to test K1297 with the dual controls today. I shall see Silvo and have K1297 wheeled in today. You get your parachutes issued to you today. We shall start flying tomorrow. I shall take Sircar up first, then all of you can gradually do a spot of dual with me and then go solo. This morning I have to take you to Wing Commander Whitelock, the Station

Commander. Do not be disappointed if Wing Commander Whitelock speaks to you in a harsh manner. He is an old School Master. Some times he thinks he is talking to school children"

Bouchier told us to meet him in the Depot Adjutant's office. We marched smartly across the sandy aerodrome upto the station adjutant's office. Pucca Cranwell steps were maintained across half a mile stretch of the aerodrome. Transport were not known those days. T.B. (F/LT Bruce) was quite nice. We thought first interview with the station Commander would be very pleasant. Memories of Air Vice Marshal Longmore of Cranwell and Churchman, Sal and Cole Hamilton of Old Sarum flashed across our brain. Little did we know that an Englishman in India is different to an Englishman in England. Probably it is the effect of heat, flies, and mosquitoes.

The door opened. Bouchier took us in. Like a batch of cadets he called us to 'attention' in Willie's room. After having sprung to 'Attention' smartly and having saluted we all remained rigidly at 'attention'.

In front of us, sitting at a very long and big polished table was young Willie, the station Commander. He was probably the most senior station Commander in the R.A.F. in India. Depot had about one thousand Airmen and hundreds of non combatant unskilled Indian labour. Here in front of us sat young Willie with a big bald head. He was a small man with greenish blue eyes which were very sharp and deep set.

For full one minute Willie looked at us from one end to the other. Sircar stood at one end and I stood at the other. In between were Amarjit, Bhupinder and Mukerjee.

His gaze was as penetrating as that of a mountain leopard. After having started at us for one minute, Willie said "How many are you? Let me count. One, two, three, four, five. Youngmen, this is a very superior organization of an. R.A.F. Depot. There are very senior officers in this Depot. In the mess do not get very fresh. If I find that you are getting fresh, then I shall bite you and shall bite you mighty hard". Each and every word of Willie was spoken with precision.

Willie sat under a ceiling fan. There was intolerable heat in Willie's room. Sweat trickled from our faces in a continuous stream. Breeches and putties and a tunic and tie were almost killing, and then Willie's address of welcome was almost cutting us in two.

He concluded "I shall watch your progress with interest. Bouchier, you may take these officers away, now".

Thank God. The reception was over. "Let us go and cool ourselves with a lemon squash in the mess" said I. There was no point in continuing our ceremonial walk to the hanger. Time was getting on. In the mess we switched on the fans at full speed and ordered some fresh nimboo pani with plenty of ice. At that moment Peter Broad came in "How did you get on with young Willie" he enquired. He could make out from the sweat on our faces. "Don't worry. After all, Willie was a school master before the last war. He always thinks he is dealing with children".

We were exceedingly bitter against Willie. After all we were educated at the same College where hundreds of cadets like Bader, Coote, Constantine and Beamish were trained. Why all this inhospitality? Then we discussed our status and what India was. Next day we all laughed. Then it Became a daily joke. Late in the evening when the Sun was setting across the red hot sand dunes of Karachi; we sat outside Gandhi hill with a lemon squash or a rock shandy. Someone would repeat the words "Youngmen do not get fresh. I shall bite you and biteyou mighty hard". Then there was a roar of laughter alround.

Young Willie's words still ring in my ears as clear as in 1933. Twenty years have passed "Youngman I shall bite you and bite you mighty hard". Wing Commander Whitelock was not a bad man as we discovered later. It was his habit to be very strict with all officers. Even with British Officers he was strict. There were moments when the school master mentality over rode his entire sentiments. Outside office hours he was a gentleman and an extremely polite person. Willie flew once a fortnight. He kept up traditions of the old war days of 1914-1918 by carrying his parachute on his back and

shoulders, all the way from his office upto T and D hanger. When Willie sat in a Wapiti, nothing could be seen except his, head, a leather helmet that he wore in 1914 and a pair of old tinted goggles. Considering his age, he was a good pilot and a steady type who never made a bad landing. He was a great believer in the old instructions issued by the Air Ministry of Lord Trenchard and Sir John Salmond's days. A Station Commander must set a good example in flying and in all other directions including sport. Willie played golf regularly and was a regular member of the boat club. He used to play Tennis also. Within the first few days of our arrival at the Depot, a dance was organised at the officer's mess. Willie ruled that Indian Officers will not be permitted to this dance as their women folk never danced in a western fashion. This suggestion was opposed by Bingo Brown who was P.M.C. (President of the Messing Committe). Eventually, in order to remove any social bar, Bouchie and Silvo voted in favour of the Indian Pip o's. Willie stood on his decision and exercised his power of veto as a station Commander. Eventually one fine Sunday morning when Willie must have heen influenced by that strong sense of sportsmanship and a great national character, incorporating hospitality and everything fine which is attributed to the English nation; Willie agreed. We were not informed about this difference of opinion between Willie on the one side and Bingo, Bouchie and Silvo the three senior G.D. types on the other side; for six months til Bouchie casually mentioned one day on the tennis court as we sat outside drinking rock shandy (Mixture of lemonade and ginger beer) after a few gruelling sets of tennis.

Mess dance came with pomp and ceremony. This was the only entertainment in the lonely wilderness of Drigh Road. Depot band consisted of about fifteen B.O.R.S. This band was exceedingly good. Wing Commander William's daughter; Diana and her younger sister Margo were dressed up in fascinating evening dress. There were many other young English girls who smiled and would have been too pleased to dance with us, but young Willie's words "Youngmen I will bite you and bite you mighty hard, if you get fresh" were still fresh in our memory.

After a few days young Willie was once again in that magnificient mood which makes the English nation so supereme and great. In a noble mood he sent a chit to me with his personal servant "Dear Awan. I and my wife would be pleased if you could come to dinner with us at half past eight on Wednesday the 25th May 1933". A chit like that from Willie meant much more than being knighted at Buckingham Palace. Those days none of us possessed a car. Pay of an Indian pilot Officer was Rs. 350. I had brought a second hand De Lage car from Old Sarum but it was lying in the dockyard at Keamari. I walked upto Willie's house. This house is still used by Station Commander. Willie's dog about one foot by one foot stood as a sentry in the doorway. I am a great believer in the old saying "Like me like my dog". One has to be very friendly with the C.O's dog even if it happens to be a little brute. Willie's dog was about the most unfriendly item on the whole station. No one could get near Willie's staff car when his little terrior was standing guard in it. Immediately the terrier barked, Willie appeared in the doorway. There was a smile all over his face. He did not put his arms around me but he did everything else that a very fine host should do. Willie liked me so much that within ten days he asked me to dinner again. Then gradually turn came for Sircar, Mukerjee, Amarjit and Bhupinder. Now Willie had become a great friend. He liked us. He always praised us on the hockey ground and during flying. In an annual Hockey fixture against the Baluch regiment, when Willie gave away the prizes, he praised the Indian Officers for saving the R.A.F. officers side from a heavy defeat.

Flying started in Wapiti K1297 which was fitted up with dual control. Sircar was the first to go up with Bouchie, who had his own methods of dual instruction. After take off, which was always about one hour before sunrise, Bouchie would set course towards Clifton. Then he would put his head outside the cockpit and smell the morning breeze. He would definitely insist on "Put your head outside the cockpit and smell the morning air over Clifton". Then there would be a question through the Gospert tubes "How do you like it"? One had to admit the fragrance of the morning air over Clifton. Bhupinder

once very nearly told Bouchie "I would like to put this aircraft on its back rather than smell the morning air". But to say this openly to Bouchie would have meant annoyance, as Bouchie was very touchy. He had spent a long time in tropical and subtropical countries and was very touchy at times. He had a very strong will power combined with temper if an occasion arose.

At least four to five hours dual was given to everyone before going solo. Bhupinder was so annoyed at this treatment like children that on the first solo, he rolled looped. stalled, spun and did everything that poor K1297 could stand upto. There were Air Ministery Orders against rolling or spinning a Wapti. We informed Bhupinder but he would not listen. At Old Sarum also he used to roll an Atlas very often. It was a bad trick as Squadron aircraft are fittted up with electrical cameras, wireless sets, bomb racks and machine guns. In rolling these aircraft, all the acid used to spill from batteries and mess up the aircraft and damage valuable equipment. One day out of fun Bhupinder rolled an Atlas when Sircar was standing up in the rear cockpit taking photographs over Salisbury plain. Out of fear of grim death he clung to whatever he could grab hold of in the rear cockpit. Camera was smashed. After landing Bhupinder did not even say "I am exteremely sorry. I thought you were strapped in or at least had the monkey chain on" Sircar was furious. In the mess at tea time he showed me his hands which were bleeding from cuts received as he grabbed various protruding things in the cockpit. He banged his head on the camera also as the aircraft went on its back. He insisted "Shall I report to Squadron Leader Cole Hamilton"? "Please do not, as this would be a disgrace against Indian Officers". said I. We shall hold a subaltern's court marshal in our room tonight and between the four of us thrash hell out of Bhupinder". But Bhupinder was a type who after a beat up would have walked back to his room. loaded a colt automatic and shot at all four of us. Therefore I consoled Sircar and asked him to forget it. Bhupinder's only motive was show off and no personal grudge against anyone.

Bhupinder continued to do the same with a Wapiti also. There was hardly a day when he did not go under the telegraph wires on Malir Road. He landed

a Wapiti at Clifton. He rolled and looped a Wapiti. His latest craze was spinning at about fourteen thousand feet. Coming out at seven. Then spining from six thousand feet upto a level Just above the ground.

One day LAC Gilhooley a British airmen came and told me "Look at the tail of J9483". There was clean cut or scrape at the top of the rudder. "He went several times under the telegraph wires over Malir road". It was extremely difficult to correct him. He would not listen to anyone. Even Flight Sergeant Hill knew about these stupid things. If Bouchie had come to know, he would have gone up in flames.

Throughout the history of Indian Air Force or Pakistan Air Force a few dare devils have existad who do not know what danger is and who love low flying. My honest advice to all I. A. F. or R. P. A. F. Squadron commanders and Super Lords at A.H.Q. would be to get rid of such types immediately. Transfer to stores or administration or a bowler hat is the only answer. I.A.F. and R.P.A.F. have been plagued with pilots who love low flying for show off. More pilots have been killed in pure low flying or low aerobatics than in all operations combined together. When all of us were solo on Wapitis, there used to be a broad grim on Bouchies face. Bouchie brought in a fourth machine also through friendly influence with Silvo. Now we had Wapti 1290 Bouchie's golden eagle (No one to fly except Bouchie-even Peter Broad was not allowed to touch this aircraft), K1297, K1260, and J9483. Bouchie had specially given K1260 to me. I used to keep it clean and tidy. It was a beautiful aircraft. I was a firm believer that it possessed life. On number of occasions as orderly officer I inspected the hangers at night. When the light was switched on, I gazed at K1260 as a living thing; fast asleep. On many occasions I put my arms round her with the words "Darling hug me". There used to be an actual whisper "Yes sweet-heart. I love You". On many occasions when flying over the Hub river, after winding in the aerial at the conclusion of practice artillery shoots or long range reconaissance, I listened to the drone of Bristol 8F engine fitted to K1260. It was like music from a singer in the Opera house. All aviators are mad especially the young ones who have noother sweet heart but an aeroplane.

Flying was carried out daily. Bouchie had chalked out a training programme from the Air H. Q. syllabus for army cooperation squardrons. Photography, Popham Panel, message picking up (M.P.U.), artiliery reconnaissance (puff shoots), camera gun, front and rear gun attacks on ground targets, close. reconnaissance with R/T, Supply dropping etc. etc. Bouchie was very fond of formatian also. Bouchie, Peter Broad and Sircar were a jolly good team. A really tight formation with only a few feet between wing tips looked a magnificient sight.

In May or June 1933 came the King's Birthday parade. During the British rule; King's birthday parade was celeberated with great pomp and glory. Karachi Brigade was commanded by Brigadier Wilson. On occasions of brigade parades; Baluch parade ground was used.

On this occasion besides the army, a small detachment of Indian Navy and two flights of the Air Forces were also to take part. T and D. flight consisted of three Wapitis flown by Silvo, Tuttle, and Adams. I.A.F. flight consisted of Bouchie, Peter Broad, and Sircar. Mukerjee and I watched the parade on the ground. We drove up in Mukerjee's two seater 1933 Chevrolet. It was one of the smartest parades I have ever seen in my life. Infantry battalions went past the saluting base by companies consisting of two long lines. All battalion commanders were mounted on horses. At the head of each company was a British company commander. Royal Essex regiment was the first to go past. Then came 1/10 Baluch followed by 10/10th Baluch the training battalion. Both the Baluch regiments were extremely impressive. Mr. Philapasky a representative of civil and military gazette who talked to us after the parade, remarked "These men of the Baluch regiment are the finest specimen of soldiers in the world. They possess a wonderful physique. Each man looks like a Roman Statue". British officers serving in Baluch regiments were also the pick of Sandhurst and the British army. Colonel Bacon, Lt. Col Crick, Major Pattigrew, Capt Collins, Major Mountain, Major Durrant, Col Mardel etc. were the best specimen of officers you could expect to see on any parade ground.

After many of the mob le and ancillary units had gone by including a supply company consisting of mules;

Air Force appeared over the horizon. First, Silvo, Tuttle and Adams fiew past at 120 M.P.H. maximum speed of a Wapiti in a gentle dive-Followed at a little distance by Bouchie, Broad and Sircar. Both flights flew past in a Vic formation. Admiration of the crowd was worth seeing. "Wonderful-wonderful" were the shouts alround. Even in 1933, an aeroplane was still considered to be an item of mystery. Karachi had very few aeroplanes. Civil airlines were flying bullock carts of the air like Hannibals and Atlantas. Silvo's flight was good but the I.A.F. was superb. Bouchie's continuous practice with Broad and Sircar had produced a precision result. At a height of only two hundred feet past the flagmast, six Wapitis went past with only six feet between Wing tips-fore and aft.

When we returned back to the mess, we found all six of them sitting down to a cold drink. Silvo as usual was strutting around the mess with a glass of cold beer in his hand "Did n't I tell you boy-that when the mules come round the bend; we should be approaching our point of straight flight? Good work-Wasn't it boy?" and then he laughed loudly. A second later Boy Bouchier joined in with "Silvo-when I saw you waggle your wings, I knew the mules were going past the saluting base". There was laughter alround for a day's good performance.

Next day Philapasky gave a terrific write up in the Civil and Military Gazette of Karachi about the wonderful show put up by the Indian Air Force. This aroused considerable jealousy among pilots of the Depot. T. Bruce. Depot adjutant telephoned to the editor of Civil and Military gazette and gave him a terrific raspberry. Those days a raspberry could be tolerated from an Englishman. During present days, editors of newspapers would not tolerate a word from even the Chief Commissioner of Karachi. Independence has changed our entire psychology.

During evenings we played Tennis or Hockey regularly. playing tennis with Bouchie was a real delight. He was the best among R.A.F. men at Karachi. At Squash also no one could beat him. He played golf also but he was no where as compared with Silvo or DOC Anderson.

On a guest night about July 1933, there was great fun when Doc Anderson challanged Silvo to drive a golf ball when placed on an upturned drinking glass. Silvo had a stroke and a full drive with a golf club. He smashed the glass into pieces. Then Doc Andee after eight whiskies and sodas; like a pucca Scotsman; drove the ball clean with a beautiful stroke. At this time he could hardly keep steady on his legs after so many whiskies. And Silvo was not an ordinary type of a golf player. In 1933-34 he had come up to the finals of the Junior R.A.F. Golf championship in England, when he was on leave. Doc, Andee walked away with his glass of whisky.

On the same guest night F/LT Stokes played a Joke with Bhupinder. During dinner, Stokes told Bhupinder "Do you know how to break Walnuts". 'No' was Bhupinder's reply. There upon Stokes produced a walnut from the dining table, Very cleverly he had placed a Triplex un-breakable glass on the table under his drinking glass. We did not suspect that it was a special type of unbreakable glass as ordinary type of glass round circular discs were placed under all drinking glasses. I was watching the proceedings also as Bhupinder's beard was moving up and down in extreme joy. When Stokes banged the walnut on the piece of glass, the walnut broke into a score of small bits. Stokes proceeded to eat the walnut and Bhupinder laughed with joy "Whenever you throw a walnut against a glass; the walnut is smashed and nothing happens to the glass" said Stokes. "You try a walnut against the book shelf in the library". Like little children we were eager to try this experiment. After King's health and completion of dinner when everyone came into the ante room, we all ran to the billiard room and the library.

Bhupinder Singh picked up the biggest walnut available between Kabul and Karachi and threw it with a terrific force at the glass of the book shelf. There was a big report as glass was smashed into tiny bits and splinters fell all over the room and nothing happened to the walnut. Bhupinder was amazed at the back fire. The experiment had gone wrong. In a flash we realized the joke. There was terrific laughter and uproar of joy at having seen such a stupid thing. The mess corporal

came up with a book and made Bhupinder sign for eight annas for recovery of damages in the officers mess.

We were very regular with Tennis and Hockey. In tennis, Sircar and I against Bouchie and Amarjit was almost a daily fixture. Five or six continuous sets would never tire us out. At the end of six sets, rock shandy was a favourite drink. This was a mixture of ginger beer and lemonade. At least two or three jugs were consumed between the four of us. Then Mukerjee and Bhupinder would join also. It was great fun.

In June Birch Club Tennis tournament started. Amarjit and Bhupinder put up a very good show. Amarjit was runner up in men's single, and in partnership with Bhupinder he was also runner up in the men's doubles. In mixed double also he got a consolation prize. Standard of Tennis was considered very high in Karachi. Local champion B.T. Blake was almost as good as Ghous Mohammad India's No. 1.

Our Airmen were limited in number. I started Hockey regularly with the airmen. The combatant section of I.A.F. had only twenty airmen:-Ram Singh, Harjinder Singh, Keshu, Sharma, Mitra, Nair, Abdul Salam, Mahboob, Malik, Ranjit Singh, Barkat Ali, Ishaq, and a few under training. Non combatant section had about five hundred men who worked in the workshops of the R.A.F. Depot:- ARS, ERS, engine shop, carburettor shop, instrument section, Wireless Section, etc. etc. I combined the two sections and produced one very good hockey team. I organised friendly games against the B.O.R's. of R.A.F. Very good results were being achieved. Gradually with constant practice and a study of the technique, we established our superiority over other civil and military teams in Karachi. We played against 1/10th Baluch and 10/10th Baluch. A British infantry regiment, if I remember correctly, the Essex regiment also had very good talent in Hockey. We played them several times. A fairly good show was put up in local tournaments against local Karachi teams like the Police, Birch Club, Mohammadens, Hindu gymkhana, Sind Madrassa, etc. but we could never come up to the standard of Karachi Port Trust, or St. Patricks School, who were a class.

Early in August Bouchie came with a happy news. Corporal Read and Rawail Singh also smiled with joy. I.A.F. officers under F/LT Bouchier were to move upto Quetta in order to take part in the Western Command exercises where No. 5 and 31 Squadrons of the Royal Air Force were to cooperate with a division of the Army in a series of exercises about sixty miles west of Quetta. Bouchie smiled "This will give a chance to the boys to learn army cooperation in the field" he said.

About the second week of August 1933, Bouchie decided to fly up his golden eagle Wapiti K1290 to Quetta and take P/O Sircar with him in the Back. F/O Peter Broad, Amarjit, Bhupinder and I were to fly up in K1297, J9483 and K1260. P/O Mukerjee was also to go by train to Quetta before Bouchie and Sircar arrived by air. At this time, Arthur Garland, a British Flying Officer from No. 31 Squadron Quetta had flown a Wapiti down to Drigh Road and had collected an overhauled aircraft for trip back to Quetta. Bouchie arranged with Arthur Garland to fly together as the flight over the Bolan pass was considered tricky in a dust haze. Also our Wapitis were fitted with older types of Bristol engines No. 8F, whereas Wapitis with Bristol 8 F.P. engines were considered fit for altitudes when a pilot got mixed up with the high peaks of Chiltan, Loe Sar, and Takatu mountains, which were about 14,000-16,000 feet above Sea level.

We waved good bye to Bouchie and Sircar and Arthur Garland as they took off in formation for Indian Wing Station Quetta. After their departure Peter Broad organised an extensive training programme including artillery shoots, mosaic photography and long distance reconnaissance and report writing.

One day we organised a long distance army cooperation practice flight to Padidan aerodrome and return. Peter led the formation. Bhupinder was No. 2 and I was No. 3 Corporal Brennen was in the rear cockpit with Peter. Corporal Sherman was with me in the rear cockpit. Bhupinder carried Amarjit in the back seat. We took off in a Vic formation from Drigh Road and set course for Hyderabad Sind. Those days the landing ground was situated on the outskirts of Hyderabad Sind near the big church.

We kept up good formation. Pith flying topes were worn to get used to flying in strong sun. When we reached over the railway bridge on the river Indus, Peter gave a signal with his two hands to break off. We broke off instantaneously.

I saw Bhupinder diving straight towards the Kotri railway bridge over the Indus. Past the bridge, Bhupinder went for a motor boat in mid stream. This amused me also and I descended to the level of the water. A few barges and country boats were a nice object for low flying, but my ideas of low flying were miles inferior to that of Bhupinder. My low flying limit was always well above one hundred feet from nearest land or water. I always believed that you should not go for some one else's trousers in case you lose your own.

Landing at the Hyderabad sandy landing ground was good fun. We had some sandwitches and tea from Thermos flasks. Aircraft were refuelled by means of 2 gallon tins of Burmah Shell. Starting of a Bristol 8F engine used to be good fun when hot. All three aircraft engines were started with bag and rope. "On go-contact" Three men pulled the propellor with a bag and rope while the pilot twirled the hand starter magneto handle like stink. When the prop started with a bang of the engine; the three men invariably fell to the ground as the prop slipped out of the gag. When my turn came in the cockpit, Peter Broad, Corporal Sherman and Amarjit gave a hand with the bag and rope. I laughed aloud with mirth as the three of them went head over heels when pulling the bag and rope and when the rope slipped after a bang from the engine.

Very soon we were up in the air and caught up with Peter Broad on the way to Padidan. It was about midday. In the month of August the heat of sun is intolerable, and especially in those days of open cockpits. Without a topee and coloured glasses, a pilot would definitely have been effected by the rays of the sun.

When we reached Padidan, Peter gave a usual signal to break off. The two outer men always did a stalled turn commonly called "Prince of Wales's feathers" those days. At the top of the turn I thought Bhupinder's aircraft in No, 2 position was in a peculiar and difficult

position. However I did not pay much attention as Bhupinder was always doing peculiar things including a complete roll when poor Sircar was carrying out photography with a hand held camera at Old Sarum.

I followed Peter in landing. We parked in a corner of the sandy aerodrome. Taxying was helped by the landing ground Pathan Chowkidar. After having switched off, I got down and undid the strap of my flying topee. My ears and chin were paining as the slip stream pulled the tropical flying topee which exerted pressure on the ears and chin.

I found that Peter was looking around with a little worried look on his face. There was no sign of Bhupinder anywhere on the horizon. He should have landed after I touched down. I told Peter "At the top of the break off, I got an impression that Bhupinder's aircraft was in a peculiar and most difficult position". Peter kept silent. Almost half an hour passed without any news. In the meantime we were proceeding with refuelling. Corporal Brennen and Sherman sat on top of the fusalage in front of the centre section and kept filling the tanks with two gallon tin cans and a chamois leather. Pathan Chowkidar and a few coolies were helpful.

A message came from the railway station master that the third aircraft had crashed at a distance of three miles from the landing ground. We immediately left Corporal Sherman with the aircraft and set out on foot towards the scene of the crash. I prayed that the incident may only have happened in the form of a forced landing. After trekking for about two miles I saw a huge group of vultures circling over the spot of the crash This was a clear indication to me who knew the behaviour of vultures. "Look Peter-the circling vultures! The game is up". said I. When we were still half a mile away a Sindhi villager passed us. I enquired in urdu whether there was any sign of life. "No" was the reply. "They are both dead-and the aircraft is smashed into smithereens"

When we came to the spot it was an awful sight. The aircraft had been smashed into bits. A piece of cloth covered the two dead bodies. I touched Amarjit's leg. It was smashed into bits. Amarjit could be recognised easily but Bhupinder's body was in a terrible mess.

Half of his face was missing. I could not stand the ghastly sight of dead bodies. It gave me a great and sudden shock. Amarjit and I were at Government College Lahore together, although he was one year junior to me. We used to live in New Hostel. Bhupinder was at F.C. College Lahore-. A very popular figure on the Tennis lawns at Ewing hall. Bhupinder also used to be very popular on a motor bike in Lahore during the college days of 1928-1929. Amariit and I spent our holidays together in Switzerland and the French Reviera. We were great friends and never quarrelled on any discussion technical or otherwise. Amarjit was a Sikh and I was a Muslim but we lived like brothers. I was exceedingly sorry that Amarjit was killed through some fault which we could never discover.

The villagers stated that the aircraft spun in. This supported my views when I saw Bhupinder in a peculiar and difficult position during break off over Padidan Aerodrome.

No time had to be lost as the bodies had to be flown back the same day before sunset. We asked the villagers to bring two charpais and carry the bodies to Padidan landing ground. Peter suggested that we would put one dead body each in our rear cockpit and fly to Drigh Road. This was a sound scheme but the idea of having a dead commrade sitting strapped up in the rear cockpit began to haunt me.

Villagers were carrying the dead bodies. This was at two O'clock in the burning heat of Sind desert with a temperature of 130°F in the open sunshine. We had nothing to eat since early morning when we had an egg and tomato sand - witch and a cup of tea at Hyderabad landing ground. It was now about two in the afternoon. With no water in the stomach, a long flight, a long trek on foot and a sudden shock of seeing dead comrades in the desert; and heat of 133°F; hit us like a hammer on the head. Poor Corporal Brennon a Scotsman was the first to be hit. He fainted and fell on the ground. The villagers picked him up and put him on a third charpai. Here two dead bodies and one unconscious person were being carried through the heat of the desert. Peter and I kept a good pace in front. Several times I

saw stars and stripes also. It was a continuous practice in Hockey that kept my stamina. Apparently I was suffering much more from shock than Peter since the two dead officers were my comrades and we lived like brothers for a long time.

At the railway station there was a trunk telephone call from O. C. Drigh Road. Peter went to the station master's office while I took off my shoes and stockings and lay down in an arm chair under an old fashioned punkha pulled by a rope held by a cooly.

The shock and the strain in the heat was colossal. For ten minutes I lay in arm chair in a very weak condition. I felt as if blood was going through my body at a very very slow pace. Then someone woke me up and handed a cold lemonade. I drank this and felt new life in myself. Peter came in the railway waiting room and said "T.B. was on the telephone. C. O. wants you to take the dead bodies by train. I shall stay with the aircraft. Silvo and Tuttle or Adams are coming up by train to collect the aircraft. There is a technical officer also coming up in order to investigate the cause of the accident". I asked Peter to have a lemonade. He sat down under the fan and drank down in one gulp.

Crowds of villagers collected at the railway station to sympathise with us. Some of them approached me with the remarks "We are exceedingly sorry to see this tragedy. Indian Air Force has very few pilots. We cannot afford to lose such good men".

The Station Master was exceedingly helpful. Two large wooden boxes were prepared before sunset. The bodies were placed in the wooden boxes and filled with ice.

In the evening these boxes were placed in a goods wagon and attached to a passenger train travelling towards Karachi. I sat in the goods wagon on a little woodenbench besides the two boxes. Peter smiled and waved to me as the train puffed out of the station. I tried to get a glimpse of the landing ground and my beautiful K1260 parked over the horizon but dusk was gathering and I saw nothing.

Soon the train gained momentum. Darkness was gathering. There was a dim light in a corner of the goods

wagon. I looked at the two boxes. Lid was not nailed as the bodies were to be taken out at Drigh Road for cremation. With the movement of the train the lids were slightly moved to one side. A vivid picture of our beautiful 'V' formation-break off and then the crash came in front of my eyes. By now it was completely dark outside. I tried to look outside the window. Dark shadows of trees slid past like millions of ghosts. I tried to doze in a sitting position but the wooden bench was so hard that sleep was almost impossible. In the dim light I caught a glimpse of the dead bodies. The fright of accompanying dead bodies at night in the wild wilderness of the deseret has to be experienced before any description can be given. Nearly two hours had passed. My courage was exhausted. The entire train looked to me like a ghost train. I saw peculiar dark and dismal railway stations where the train stopped for a few seconds. I tried to get down in order to ask the guard to give me additional light and one man to keep me company and watch over dead bodies. Every time I got down, the train pushed off without a whistle. There was no guard, no station master. I had to scramble back into the wagon. Now Bhupinder's half missing face was more frightening than ever before, and staring straight into my eyes.

At one station, I saw under the pale light of an oil lamp that there was another goods wagon slightly better and with a bench and more light. I quietly slid into the second wagon and fell fast asleep on the bench. Early in the morning I woke up when the goods train was near Dhabejee railway station. There was no place for a wash or a shave. About an hour later the train pulled into Drigh Road railway station. Doc Anderson with about two hundred Sikh sepoys from the non combatant section of I.A.F. were waiting at the platform. I handed over the two wooden boxes containing dead bodies of Amarjit and Bhupinder to the funeral party.

In the general confusion for the funeral the Adjutant had completely forgotten to send a transport for me. I had to walk up to Gandhi hill from Drigh Road railway station. I quickly had a shave and bath and changed into breeches and putties for the funeral. Gurdial Singh from the Civil Airport arrived in time. The bodies

were cremated in the Hindu Sikh cremation ground in Karachi, with full Air Force honours.

Sircar and Mukerjee were at Quetta. Amarjit and Bhupinder's death, really left me in a very lonely condition. In the evening when the setting sun produced scarlet and crimson colours in the western horizon, I sat alone at Gandhi hill, with only a solitary chair and a gramaphone placed in front. I tried to console myself. Titch Tandon would turn up at times but Titch Tandon was a Stores Officer. He was not a bird of the same feather. Peter Broad persuaded me to go to pictures with his girl friend Joan but I preferred to be alone. A regular game of Tennis with my Pathan bearer Umar Khan kept my mind occupied. C. O. had, stopped my flying for a few days in order to get over the shock. Eventually on the fifth day Peter Broad came up and said "You can do a short trip for about fifteen minutes. The aerodrome is soft after the rains. Do not land in a soft patch".

It was a delight to be up once again in K1260-my darling K1260. She never betrayed me once. C.O. of the station was very careful in not allowing me to fly after the death of two beloved comrades. But nothing had happend to my nerves. It is very difficult to shatter the nerves of a young man of twenty two years.

A court of enquiry was being assembled to investigate the cause of crash. C.O. sent a word to me through Peter Broad to go up to a good altitude and spin a Wapiti several times. I spun K1260 several times and recovered. A Wapiti in those days was in a category of aircraft which were not to be spun. There was a British Air Ministry order forbidding such aircraft as a Wapiti to be spun. I must say that it was quite difficult to spin a Wapiti. Several times I made her stand up on the tail and then kicked the rudder. She only would go into spirals. I almost lost my temper. Come on darling; yield! But she would not yield. I put on sufficient amount of engine and made her stand upon the tail. As she stalled, I put on full right rudder. As she commenced the spin, I gave her a burst of engine and then pulled the throttle back. She went into a spin like a two-penny top. I repeated it at least six times in accordance with orders. I fully agreed with Air Ministry

that a Wapiti was not to be spun. After the first three or four turns, tremendous stresses and strains were set up in the aircraft. This aircraft was a non-aerobatic category. Instead of usual aerobatic straps she had a maternity harness going round the waist. This was a very insecure arrangement in difficult manoeuvres. All those old sepoys of the Indian Air Force like Ram Singh, Harjinder Singh, Abdussalam, Mahboob etc. who hand a doze of spinning in a Wapiti with an old pilot of the I.A.F. will still remember.

Within the next few days, I had to face the court of enquiry. Squardron Leader Binge Brown was the president of the court of enquiry. He asked me "Have you ever spun a Wapiti aircraft". "Yes-Sir" was the answer. "Do you think it is easy to spin a Wapiti". "No Sir" was the reply. "A Wapiti does not get into a spin easily. But she comes out provided you take her out after four or five turns".

Another few days passed. There was a signal from F/LT Bouchier-"Send P/O Awan to Quetta immediately for Army cooperation flying with the Western Command". Bouchie had not asked Peter to come up for a few days. He came up a few days later. I left by Quetta mail along with my bearer. When I reached the railway station I found Sircar waiting for me at the railway station. He was dressed up in breeches and puttees. He shook me by the hand and then burst into girlish laughter. "It is nice to find you here in a land where men are men and women wear trousers"-and then again he burst into laughter. Then suddenly he began in a very low tone "I was exceedingly sorry to hear about Amarjit and Bhupinder. How the hell did it happen". Then I replied "When we broke off over Padidan-we did the Prince of Wales's feathers. I saw Bhupinder's aircraft in a very difficult position with the belly turning outwards, and almost standing up on the tail".

An R.A.F. transport was waiting outside. This was a Trojan from No. 5 Squadron with a British driver. We drove down to the mess. A hot bath was ready for me. I put on the mess kit and we walked down to the mess. The mess was over crowded with British officers. It was a wing station with No. 5 and 31 squadrons of

the Royal Air Force and Headquarters of the R.A.F, wing. Group Captain Gordon Dean, nick named Gunga Dean commanded the Wing. Squadron Leader Bill anchors commanded No. 5 squadron and Squadron Leader Alwood commanded No. 31 Squadron R. A. F. Both squadrons were Army cooperation.

Bouchie met me in the mess. He expressed great sorrow at losing Amarjit and Bhupinder. Murkerjee also came and we had a livelychat. The mess was full of the old comrades from Cranwell and old Sarum. Rhys, Gosnel, LLoyd, 0′ Kelly, Rolfe, 0′ Dwyer etc, were all here with either No. 5 or 31 Squadrons.

After dinner Sircar and Mukerjee came in my room again. My usual joke with Mukerjee used to be "Do you ring the holy temple bells in your room on a Sunday morning". This joke had started from Cranwell in September 1930 when Sergeant Major Joe Beresford came to ask us whether we had any objection to going on a church parade? I replied "No-we have no objection. We shall go on church parade on a Sunday morning but fall out after parade". Mukerjee remarked "You bloody fool! had we informed the Sergeant Major that in accordance with our religious practice we have to ring temple bells in our room on a Sunday morning-we should have been saved from a blooming church parade on a Sunday morning also-and our future generations at Cranwell would curse us for not spinning a fast one and getting out of church parades on Sunday morning."

"Did you hear the story how Bouchie and I arrived at Quetta" said Sircar "No" was my answer. "Please relate the story"-We asked. Sircar went ahead with the story. "When we left Karachi, Bouchie was not quite sure whether K1290 would be able to climb over the Bolan pass, with a Bristol 8F engine developing 450 H.P. So before we left, Bouchie asked F/O Arthur Garland who was returning back to 31 Squadron Quetta with a Wapiti fitted with an 8 F.P. engine developing about 470 H.P. to lead the way to Quetta aerodrome.

When we left Drigh Road, Bouchie was following Arthur all the way. Over the Bolan pass Bouchie was trailing miles behind. Arthur looked worried as he climbed over the pass. Past Spezand, in the open valley,

Bouchie started catching up. When we turned round the bend of Chiltan mountain, and before reaching the aerodrome, Bouchie shot forward leaving Garland miles behind. "An old fighter pilot of 1914-18 cannot follow youngsters of today "said Bouchie. We all roared with laughter.

We had brought only one aircraft which was not fitted up with R/T, W/T, machine guns, bomb racks or cameras. So the only arrangement was to fly in the back seat of R.A.F. pilots in order to gain experience. This was a bit humiliating.

We had done just as well if not better than LLoyd, Gosnel, Rhys, O'Kelly, Rolfe etc at the school of army cooperation and No. 16 A.C. Squadron old Sarum. Here at Quetta they were fully qualified operational pilots with No. 5 and 31 Squadrons whereas we all were still seeking experience from the back seat.

One day I went up in the back of an R.A.F. Flight Lieutenant who was to carry out a puff shot on the side of the hill where present residential area is located at Samungli. I never realised that he had specialized in signals. When we got over the target at 6,000 feet, he commenced buzzing and morse at the rate of twenty words per minute. Proper speed for army cooperation pilots when carrying out artillery cooperation was eight words a minute. I kept a good check that the code KT. KT. does not escape my ears because after KT one has to observe the shot. On a massage pad I kept the list of observations. He was so good that he allowed very little time between the shell burst and buzzing the observation to the ground. When we landed be checked my observations. I breathed a sigh of relief to find that out of ten observations he corrected only two, others were right.

Similarly we obtained experience for mosaic photography and reconnaissance from the back seat of R.A.F. pilots. A full division was deployed in tectical manoeuvres about sixty miles west of Quetta.

Then Peter Broad brought up a second aircraft from Karachi. With two of our own aircraft we got a better chance of doing some local solo flying. This aerodrome was a kutcha square shaped airfield with

tremendous amount of dust alround. One Wapiti taking off covered the aerodrome in dust like a smoke screen.

In the evenings we had a few hours of Tennis in the Officers club. Mukerjee and I against Bouchie and Sircar was a daily fixture. On Saturdays we always went to pictures. Bouchie was very strict on mess kit and a clean shirt and collar. When cycling on a big broad road, Bouchie would insist on a tight formation on bicycles. One night Bouchie lost temper with a British troop because he spoiled our formation and came in the way. Bouchie took his name and number but later on, in a kind mood, he forgot-all about it.

Bouchie was very fond of his Indian officers and took a great pride in us. About the middle of October Bouchie left for Karachi in his golden eagle K1290. He took Naik Ram Singh also with him. We came to see him off. After testing his engine and the magnetos, he waved a very warm 'good bye' and took off. With Peter Broad it was different. After office hours it was difficult to see Peter. Quetta was full of young dames. It was difficult to find a young air force officer of the Royal Air Force after flying and office hours.

Quetta market used to be full of grapes and melons. One day Sircar and I walked into the market and for a sum of two rupees only, bought a huge basket of grapes. We srarted with basket at about 11 A.M. We had no lunch. At about half past two we had eaten so much, that we could not stand on our feet. We slept till five. We could not even have our tea.

One fine morning, Mukerjee, Sircar, Peter Broad and I were cycling back from the aerodrome towards the officer's mess, for breakfast. What a fine sight met our eyes! At the level crossing, 16th Cavalry in full battle dress and equipment was cantering along the main road. They were going off to a place nearly sixty miles out to join the rest of the division engaged in manoeuvres and tactical exercises. No. 5 and 31 squadrons R.A.F. were cooperating with the blue force on one side and red force on the other.

16th Cavalry, 3rd Cavalry, 7th Cavalry, 5/8th Punjab Regiment, 5/10 Baluch regiment, 6/13 Frontier Force, a battalion of Rajputana rifles and 7th Rajput

and a battalion of Hyderabad Regiment were the only Indianized units upto 1933. 16th Cavalry at that time had some of the senior Indian Officers, Wadalia, Sheo Dutt Singh, Idris, Shiv Verma, Habibullah etc. etc. We always took tremendous pride in the Indianized units. The horse, rider, lance, sword and a rifle was a beauty to see. We stood there for a long time watching the entire unit going out to the manoeuvres at a fast pace.

During these manoeuvres a whole force comprising of nearly two battalions of infantry and all other ancilliary services were not observed from the Air for a period of five days. This force hid in the shady bed of Surkhab river. No. 5 and 31 Squadrons went round in circles for five days before a ground patrol located this force. Shady beds of rivers can be successfully used for providing shelter against air observation. Western Command manoeuvres were almost coming to an end. It was getting very cold indeed in the month of November. A guest night was arranged. At the end of dinner, Group Captain Gorden Dean, nick named Gunga Din, Squadron Leader Bill Anchors, O.C. 5 Squadron and Squadron Leader Alwood O.C. 31 Squadron, made after dinner speeches. It was a farewell dinner to Group Captain Gorden Deane who was leaving India after many years of service. Group Captain had almost as much fame throughout the length and breadth of India as did Rudyard Kipling's Gunga Din.

During this guest night a few good words were said about the Indian Air Force; and our work at Quetta. Pilot Officer Sircar was asked to reply. I still remember Sircar's very brief and humourous speech;

"Group Captain Gordan Dean, and gentlemen:-

After dinner speeches are like new babies- very easy to conceive but very difficult to deliver".—"Hurrah-Hurrnh! there were cheers and clapping and loud laughter for two minutes.

We had taken only one aircraft to Quetta. Peter Broad decided to bring it back with Hawai Sepoy Harjinder Singh. Sircar Mukerjee and I stuffed up the railway compartment with grapes and melons. We commenced eating fruit when Quetta Mail started rolling down the

Bolan pass. By the time we reached Jacobabad, the huge basket was empty and we were rendered unserviceable till we got down at Drigh Road railway station.

Month of December passed in carrying out extensive practice in close reconnaissence with R/T, medium reconnissance with W/T, photographic reconaissance, puff shoots, front camera gun attacks on ground targets, message picking up (M.P.U.), bombing runs over targets with the help of a course setting bomb sight (C.S.B.S.) and mosaic photography etc. A poor army cooperation pilot is a fighter, bomber, navigator, wireless operator, photographer and a flying clerk also, as he has to write long reports on message pads regarding enemy troop concentrations and movements. After writing long reports on message forms tied down on a pad on his knees, he had to transmit it by means of either radio telephony or morse. Wireless sets of 1933; you had to see these before you could believe anything. An R31B set had to be heated up for ten minutes before any radio waves could be received or transmitted. The aerial had to be reeled out from a very small tube in the back seat. Air gunner had to reel out the aerial. All types of squeaking noises were heard. A pilot had to be a magician in order to find out whether the chirping in the receiver was from a dicky bird or Flight Sergeant Groom from theoperations station.

Message picking up was another difficult type of an exercise. A hook approximately six to eight feet in length was reeled out from the belly of a Wapiti by the Air Gunner. Two poles representing two rifles were stuck in the ground about twenty feet apart. You made a go at the string and the message hanging from the string between the two poles. If you came too low, the hook bounced off the ground and hit the bottom of the aircraft with a terrific wallop. If you came a little high, You missed the string. If the wheels touched the string, the message bag would slide up the wheels and get caught up in the under-carriage and you went round and round the R.A.F. Camp Drigh Road, with coloured message bags and strings trailing behind you like a Christmas tree.

Mosaic photography was another difficult thing. In a given area of 5 miles X 4 miles, knowing the size

of photographic plate, focal length of the lens, height, scale of the photograph, iateral overlap of 75% and fore and aft overlap of 30%, a difficult type of calculation had to be undertaken for working out the time interval, number of runs, and number of exposures in each run.

Good mosaic photography was accomplished by a team of two officers. The pilot had to steer steady courses. Officer in the back seat had to remove the entire back panel in the rear cockpit and lie flat on his stomach with a stop watch in the left hand and lever of the vertical camera in the right hand. It was quite a frightening thing to lie in a completely open cockpit, both top and bottom. The floor supported your body from the stomach to the feet. From head to the middle, the body lay flat over a big hole looking down on the earth thousands of feet below you.

In England two R.A.F. ex-cranwell pilot officers were engaged in an exercise of this nature. With a little rough movement by the pilot, the second fellow in the back went clean through the floor of the aircraft and hit the ground thousands of feet below.

Mukerjee and I commenced the team work together in December 1933 for high altitude mosaic photography. Electrically operated cameras had just arrived in the British Squadrons posted in England. In the India Command, these electrically operated cameras had not arrived so far. If I remember correctly after twenty years, the name of the camera, operated manually and fitted to all Wapiti Aircraft being used by all R.A.F. Squadrons in India, was P7. Officer in the back after guiding the pilot over the starting point by speaking through a Gosport tube, clicked the first exposure. From there onwards he was like a human machine in working the stop watch for calculatin of time interval; winding up the shutter for the next exposure and then clicking when the watch showed the correct time interval. Ten or twleve to fifteen exposures were taken, in each run. Then the pilot broke off the run and was once again guided on to the starting point of the second run. This was repeated till all runs were completed. This was a very severe test for cooperation and collaboration between man and machine.

On very chilly mornings at a height of fourteen thousand feet, freezing temperatures would bring out water from the nose and eyes of the man in the back. If I was in the back, Mukerjee would take it easy but if he were in the back, he either whistled or sang religious hyms till I got thoroughly browned off with him. At the end of December 1933 Pilot Officer Aspee Engineer joined us after graduating from Cranwell and School of Army Cooperation old Sarum. Aspee was a Wizard on photography. When he was in the back, we produced some of the most wonderfull and perfect mosaics which were required by Sind Brigade or any other Army organisation. Aspee was a most thorough and calculating type of a young fellow. I began to like him. Every work that we did together produced applause from higher authorities. Mukerjee and I having been together from the first term at Cranwell, and having been like pals and brothers throughout our career in the Indian Force were apt to fool around a lot. One day when flying in the vicinity of Quetta when I was taking photographs from the back; in midair I came out of the cockpit and made a gesture to Mukerjee that I was going to climb over the scarf ring and sit on the tail. I made a very strong gesture and kept a serious face. His first actions were that he smiled but when I made a determined effort in climbing out the cockpit, he made a very serious and frightened face. Eventually he was on his knees and with folded hands he entreated me not to climb towards the tail without a parachute as the slip stream would blow me away. I did not give up the joke till we were having a cup of tea together in the mess.

In December 1933 when Aspee joined us at Drigh Road, he was proclaimed as a national hero by the Parsee Community of Karachi. Everyday Aspee's fullsize pictures would appear in the leading newspapers of Karachi. Publicity by the press is something which is hated by the Air Force. Bouchie used to get into such a temper. He used to quarrell with editors of newspapers about so much publicity given to aspee. Eventually he got so browned off that he sent for Aspee in his office and said "Look here young man, you might be a terrific hero for the Parsee Community of Karachi for winning Agha Khan's cup for a flight from Karachi to London in 1929. You might also

have been an ace pilot at Cranwell in winning Grove's memorial flying trophy in competition with British boys in your final term but you are no better than any of my senior boys Sircar, Awan or Mukerjee. If you do not stop your relations from writing up all the nonsense in the daily newspapers I shall stop your flying and take disciplinary action against you". Proclamation of a national hero and an aviator from Mars dully stopped from appearing on the front pages of daily newspapers of Karachi.

Aspee when he joined in December 1933 was a real nice boy. At Cranwell he had won Grove's Memorial flying trophy in competition with British boys. This was really a very fine show. Previously Amarjit and Bhupinder also took part in this competition in July 1932 in our final term at Cranwell. Amarjit put up a very polished show by carrying out a very fine display of inverted flying in an Armstrong whitworth Atlas Aircraft fitted with a Jaguar IVC engine. In later years Mehar Singh would definitely have won Groves memorial flying trophy but for the reason that some unsporting conservative old Air Marshal at the Air Ministry in London passed a regulation that British boys only will be eligible for the Groves Memorial competition. Colonials were barred from winning this trophy.

I sincerely hope that twenty one years later, when I am writing these few lines, the Air Ministry would once again promulgate the same regulations as existed before the year 1933 i.e. cadet from any part of the British Commonwealth will be entitled to compete for Grove's Memorial prize for flying if they were cadets in the final term at the R.A.F. College Cranwell.

Aspee and I made a good team for taking large mosaic photographs for the army. Those days with hand operated cameras it was a real task to come over the starting pin point at fourteen thousand feet, click the camera, then wind the shutter, check the time interval, keep a mental record of the correct number of exposures as there was a shortage of films and corporal Gilhooley would make such a face if too many extra exposures were taken.

About this time Flying Officer Philip Haynes R.A.F. was posted from No. 20 Squadron R. A. F. Peshawar to our 'A' flight No. 1 Squadron I. A. F. Drigh Road. He was posted in place of F/O Peter Broad who was going away to England after completing two years with the Royal Air Force in India. We were really sorry to bid good bye to Peter who had done such a lot for us. He had come as a volunteer from the R. A. F. wing at Quetta. Those days people did not like leaving their old squadrons for the simple reason that in squadron life a young pilot enjoyed the blessings of team work and brotherhood. No flying officer was keen to leave his squadron at an up country station and join the Indian Air Force where no one knew the behaviour of Indian pilot officers.

Bouchie was at Air Headquarters Simla when Air Marshal Sir John Steele passed orders for the formation of 'A' flight No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. at Drigh Road. Names of volunteers were asked from all British Squadrons in India. For the post of a Flight Commander; F/LT David Atcherley who was Commanding 'A' flight of No. 20 Squadron R.A.F. Peshawar and who was my instructor at Cadet College Cranwell from September 1930 to July 1931, and F/LT Bouchier D.F.C., A.F.C. who by virtue of working in A.H.Q. and having seen our reports from the Cadet College (Signed by A.V.M. Longmore) and at Old Sarum (Signed by Wing Commander Sal); volunteered to take over command of 'A' flight No. 1 Squadron Indian Air Force. No other British Officer volunteered in spite of the many temptations in the way of extra pay and allowances and promise of promotion etc., put forward by the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Sir John Steele. Senior British pilots were not keen to join the Indian Air Force as instructors. Indian Air Force was a young service and people did not know how Indians would shape in such a service. I felt sorry for Bouchier as the poor man got nothing else but disappointment and headaches from the I.A.F. for a long time. It is exceedingly difficult to make an Air Force out of a handful of youngmen. First of all, the Airmen mutinied on a small scale before we came up to Karachi. Their terms of service and pay etc., were not so good. About 90% of them struck work and left. This was the first disappointment to Bouchier.

Then within the first four months from the formation of 'A' flight; Bhupinder and Amarjit were killed in a crash. Poor Bouchier was so disappointed that he used to be speechless whenever we discussed expansion of I.A.F. Third shock had yet to come. F/O Sircar crashed into a company of Baluch troops on the main road to Hab river when carrying out low practice attacks on ground troops. This accident is described as follows:-

In the month of February 1934 a fresh batch of officers consisting of P/O's Majumdar, Narendra and Daljit Singh joined us at Drigh Road. This was great fun. By now, Sircar, Mukerjee and I were promoted to the ranks of Flying Officers. It was great fun to have young P/O's to boss over. We generally used to fly these three in our back coockpits when cooperating with the Sind Brigade on Hab river. It was really great fun. The future was looking very bright indeed. F/O Philip Haynes had been posted from No. 20 Squadron R.A.F. Peshawar to us. He was a great boy. There would yet be a more capable pilot like Philip to be found. Efficiency personified: a good looking boy with plenty of guts and tremendous flying capability. He was loaned from the Royal Air Force to act as an instructor. Philip could do everything better than any of us and we were not a bunch of B. Fs by any chance. Aspee had won Grove's Memorial Flying prize at the R.A.F. College Cranwell. Sircar had stood fourth or fifth at the school of army cooperation Old Sarum, in December 1932 when fellows like F/LT John Norwood and F/O Crisham were on the course. We also had picked up a tremendous amount in practical exercises on M.P.U., front attacks, bombing, artilly reconnaissance, close support, photographic reconnaissance, etc. But Philip was head and shoulders above any of us. None of us drank. It was only after a party and the next morning when occasionally Philip was not quite upto the mark, that one of us would score better marks in front gun attack, formation, or message picking up.

On a cold and wintry morning, F/LT Bouchier, Philip and Sircar were to carry out a formation low attack, and singly on a battalion; the 4/10th Baluch Regiment. Three Wapitis were started up. Wind was so strong that Bouchier gave up the idea of a formation take off. A cold wind had now increased to the velocity

of a dust storm. Aspee came to me in the Pilot's room. "Zaidy look at Naik Abdul Salaam! He looks like a ghost". Aspee's expression and superstitions of a Parsee always produced laughter among all of us. However, I was always very fond of Aspee and used to hear whatever he had to say. I came out of the pilot's room and saw Naik Abdul Salaam with an Air Gunner's harness. I have never seen a man look so greenish black in my life. He really looked as if he had got out of a grave and put on a gunner's harness. I stopped laughing and walked to where Sircar had just started up his Wapiti. Naik Abdul Salaam got into the back cockpit and stood up. The wind was so strong that LAC Sharma and Mitra could not help F/O Sircar in taxying the aircraft. These were the days of comradeship. I ran along the taxying aircraft about half the length of the sandy aerodrome and helped Sircar in turning into wind. I saw Bouchier just wave the airmen away and take off. Philip was just manoeuvring into position. Philip took off. Then Sircar took off. Before he took off I shouted to him at the top of my voice "Best of luck-Be careful. It is a terrible day". The three joined up in formation and headed towards the Hab river.

Hardly an hour had passed when Bouchier landed followed by Philip. Bouchier was terribly worried. Philip talked to Aspee. "Sircar has crashed on top of the troops. God help them because there was a whole battalion underneath".

What had happened was that in carrying out low attacks on a battalion; 4/10th Baluch Regiment; Sircar came down wind and was caught in the slip stream of Bouchier and Philip. He should have been careful in not coming so low when downwind in a strong gale when the aircraft loses considerable amount of lift. He tried to pull up the aircraft but of no use. The aircraft crashed in the middle of troops who were supposed to be firing at the attacking aircraft. Twelve men were killed instantaneously and another ten were injured and had to be admitted into hospital. The aircraft caught fire and was completely burnt. P/O Sircar and Naik Abdussalam had a miraculous escape, but they received severe injuries.

This was a terrible catastrophe within the first year of our formation at Drigh Road. Poor Bouchier

was almost cut in two. First the disappointment and then the court martial of F/O Sircar. Wing Commander Whitelock and a young R.A.F. Flight Lieutenant from Quetta were members of the Court Martial. Group Captain Henderson D.F.C., A.F.C. was the president of the court martial. Squadron Leader Bingo Brown was prosecuting Officer and F/LT Blockey was the Defence Counsel. Poor Sircar was found guilty and convicted by the Court Martial to be thrown out of the Air Force. We were reliably told that the little man; Flight Lieutenant from Quetta as a member of the Court Martial had awarded a punishment of two year's rigorous imprisonment and cashiering. It was the kind heartedness of Group Captain Henderson that the imprisonment sentence was squashed. Poor Sircar had to leave the Air Force after sentence was confirmed by Air Marshal Sir John Steele. Many British officers tried to help Sircar. Chief Technical Officer Squadron Leader Norton nicknamed 'Baldy' argued with the court for half an hour when giving his evidence on effects of wind currents on aerofoils. He had studied this subject at Cambridge when specializing in aeronautical engineering. He was of the opinion that a strong gale had caused loss of lift to the aerofoil when downwind. The stick could not pull the aeroplane out of a partial stall before it hit the ground troops.

We tried to cheer up Sircar. His career had come to an end. After years of laughter, fun and play we stood at the platform when the train moved out of Karachi Cantonment Station taking a comrade and a bird of the same flock away; and out of sight for ever.

Bouchier was almost cut in half with the disappointment of losing Sircar, the accident and killing of so many troops. He was also not very happy with some of our evidence when we tried hard to defend Sircar in front of the Court Martial. Bouchier did not speak to us for one month. But he did not give up hope. In a month's time Sir John Steele visited the R.A.F. Depot Drigh Road. He arrived with all the pomp and glory of a C-in-C. F/LT David Atcherley flew him in a Wapiti. A flight of six aircraft escorted him to Drigh Road. This was our first doze of A.O.C-in-C's inspection. Clean uniform with sparkling brass buttons were worn. At about 11.30 in the morning we all were in the pilot's room of 'A' flight

No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. P/O Daljit Singh opened the door and went out for a minute in the hanger. He returned back with a broad grin, a giggle and winking of the eyes which was typically Daljit Singh. "Come and listen to uncle's lecture outside," he said. We opened the door to listen to what was going on. In the T and D (Test and Despatch Flight) hanger which was the second half of our big hanger, Sir John Steel was delivering a lecture to about two hundred British Other Ranks (B.O.R's), His voice echoed and re-echoed across the length and breadth of the hanger. He spoke like a public orator. "Holy Jesus" remarked some of our B.O.R's. "The man should be in the Houses of Parliament".

I only listened to a few lines, and if I remember correctly, these lines were as follows "Indian Politician is getting very very restless. He wants to know, what is happening..." at this time Bouchier came in to inform us that Sir John Steele would be coming into our pilots room within the next few minutes. Knowing fully well that he would be damned annoyed at Sircar's crash and with us all, we prepared to receive the raspberry. Sir John Steele, came into the pilots room with all the glory and fury of an Air Officer-Commanding-in-Chief of the days of British rule. We had hardly stood up to attention and saluted when the fury of a C-ih-C's anger was let loose. He almost growled as an angry lion. "Let me count how many are you? One, two, three, four, five, six. When you all get together, one does not know what you may do. Many a night have I lain awake thinking of you. I don't know. I may be wrong. I hope I am wrong" with these words he left the room. Six of us, Mukerjee, myself, Aspee, Majumdar, Narendra and Daljit Singh were still manoeuvring to find a little space in the tightly packed corner of the pilot's room, in order to spring to attention and salute. But the door was closed abruptly. When our hands came upto salute, I remember seeing squadron Leader Norton C.T.O. (Chief Technical Officer's) back. A.O.C.-in-C. had walked away abruptly followed by young Willie Whitelock, the Depot Commander and other senior officers of A.H.Q. and Depot. In the R.A.F. phraseology this is called an Imperial raspberry. However-it has always been the custom with all Air C-in-C's that after administering an imperial raspberry, the words

"Good-morning" or "Good-night" are always thrown in at the recipients of the award. In our case this privilege was withdrawn.

We were left in a shattered condition. For five minutes we looked at each other's faces in a dazed condition. The only man who was still in good humour was Daljit Singh. He was experiencing subdued laughter. "Didn't I tell you before, that all of you blighters deserve a raspberry. Fancy getting up so early in the morning and trotting around in circles, trying to make an Air Force". said Daljit Singh. Everyone was quiet and then there was one sudden outburst of laughter from everyone. This lasted for one second only and then quietness and an atmosphere of disappointment prevailed. Lunch time was getting nearer. We trekked accross the sandy aerodrome. In the mess, we met Philip Hynes. He had a slight grin on his face. "Never mind! Raspberries should be taken lightly in this world. Cheer up you fellows" said he.

Next day Air Marshal Sir John Steele expressed a desire that he would like to sit next to his Indian Officers during lunch in the mess. A reaction had probably set in his mind. We also realized that the old man was probably feeling sorry for administering a raspberry to the Indian Officers. We were not happy with him because throughout his speech or raspberry he kept on saying "There is only one standard and that is the standard of the Royal Air Force. Many a night have I lain awake thinking of you. I may be wrong. I hope I am wrong". These words are still fresh in my memory although twenty one years have passed.

We were all very very frightened to sit next to Sir John Steele. His monocole on one eye and a lion's growl would frighten any junior bograt. However beggars cannot be choosers. We had no other alternative. Bouchie came and primed us. "Look here chaps. Do not be worried. Sir John is exceedingly good at talking. He is very fond of sports. He likes cricket a lot. Get going on cricket". At lunch time I found to my horror that my chair and name was on the right hand of Sir John. I said to myself "now-brother-you had your chips".

As soup was brought by the bearers and the Khidmatgar, I picked up courage and spoke to Sir John, "I believe, Sir, there was a very interesting cricket match between the Air H.Q. and G.H.Q. at Delhi".

My word! This worked like magic! Sir John gave such a beautiful description of the cricket match that I imagined I was actually playing in that game. He was humble as a lamb, and exceedingly polite. He was full of entertainment. In fact within the first five minutes I thought I had met a long lost friend from my home town of D.I.K. in the frontier province. Sir John was so kind and noble. Almost every one including Majumdar, Narendra, Mukerjee. Aspee and Daljit Singh joined in the laughter and fun of Sir John's stories. Before lunch was over Sir John invited all of us to Simla during summer. "I have a very big bungalow. You must come and stay with me". This was really grand fun. We left the mess after taking coffee wit Sir John. We were all in such a happy mood to find that the A.O.C-in-C was in reality a kind old man ready to help us at any time.

All these episodes relate to the year 1934. I have forgotten a very interesting incident of early 1933, when we first came to Drigh Road. It was May 1933. This incident came vividly to my memory, only a fortnight ago in early June 1954 when my wife and I were asked to an R.P.A.F. ball at Drigh Road. When dancing with my wife on the Tenis Court in a very superb setting, with decorations and with the jazz music of the R.P.A.F. station band, I told my wife and a party of young R.P.A.F. officers and wives. "Twenty one years ago, six Indian Officers made their first appearance at the R.A.F. officers' mess ball; at this very spot in early May 1933.

Wing Commander Whitelock the Station Commander passed orders that the six Indian Officers will not be permitted in the dance. He must have been of the opinion that the six Indian Pilot Officers will misbehave. Bouchie was very worried as he liked us in England and on board S.S. Tuscania where with hundreds of white women on board, we never misbehaved once. Squadron Leader Brown, D.F.C., A.F.C. popularly called Bingo was the P.M.C. He sent a note back to

young Willie that if the Indian Officers were disallowed, he as P.M.C. would cancel the dance. Bouchie was at the back of it. He was instrumental in making Bingo write a very stiff note to Willie. This worked like magic. Six Indian officers were permitted to come to dance. This incident was not told to us till a year later, when one day in a Jolly mood, Bouchie told us the story.

During May .1933, the R.A.F. Depot possessed the finest band as far as millitary stations were concerned. On this night in May 1933, tennis court in the officers mess was beautifully decorated with multicoloured lights. Terrace lawns surrounding the hard court had seating arrangements for approximately four hundred gents and ladies. All officers wore summer mess kit with miniature decorations. Bouchie was the best decorated person. His chest was covered with miniature war medals. In parties, Bouchie's face always used to be covered in a perpetual smile. His wife and children were in England. He was so popular with ladies. Sircar, Amarjit, Bhupinder, Mukerjee and I arrived together. We were a bit shy and under confident; knowing that a poor Indian Officer cannot hold his chest out in front of senior British officers and their wives and friends. At this time we were all unmarried and did not know whether during future years our wives and sisters would come out to dances or whether we would be social outcasts during big parties, in R.A.F. officers messes throughout India.

Mrs. Brown came in a beautiful white evening dress. Mrs. Shaw also had a beautiful evening dress. Both of them were good looking. There were many beautiful women in this party. Bouchie introduced us to some of the ladies. Amarjit asked Mrs. Brown for a dance. No one of the rest of us could pick up courage to ask any one for a dance. We were self conscious and we knew that this was our first appearance in a dance at the officers mess Royal Air Force in India. Previously we always felt at home at the R.A.F. College ball or at No. 16 Squadron Old Sarum England where many dances were held during the year.

This dance at Drigh Road was our first social introduction. None of us went near a drink. Our behaviour was good. During future dances we always

felt at home. Mrs. Whitelock hegan to like us. After a period of six months Wing Commander Williams Mrs. Williams, and their two charming young daughters Diana, and her younger sister Margo arrived at Drigh Road. We used to play Tennis together. Gradually we merged into the social activities of the R.A.F. officers mess and always felt as a member of the same happy family. We never misbehaved anywhere. All senior R.A.F. officers liked us. There was such a charming company of Diana Williams, Mrs. Blockey, Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. Silvester, and other charming ladies of Drigh Road that we never felt strange or lonely for a minute.

Sircar's crash had left us in a very bad position. Air Headquartes were disappointed. Out of the five Indian Pilot Officers three had crashed. Two were left. It was not known whether these two would also survive. Admittedlly Sircar, Amarjit and Bhupinder were better pilots then Mukerjee and I. One day Bouchie had an unofficial letter from A.H.Q. Simla. It contained an offer for the two Indian officers to give up the Indian Air Force as it was a terrible uphill task. Political service was offered which meant that Mukerjee would soon become Assistant Commissioner in Burdwan, and I would become Assistant Commissioner in Peshawar. We would both be dealing with cases of murder, rape and assault and not making a Wapiti stand up on its tail in the air.

Mukerjee entered my room at No. 1 Gandhi hill Drigh Road. I was in the middle of a midday siesta. Mukerjee woke me up. "An unofficial letter has been received from Simla saying that an offer for political service in the Government of India will be made to the Indian officers if they are desirous of giving up the struggle for making No. 1 Squadron of I.A.F." I informed Mukerjee in an agry voice after having been disturbed from a midday siesta on Gandhi hill "Please inform Flight Lieutenant Bouchier that we set out with the task of making Indian Air Force when we were at school. Many of our beloved comrades have perished in the struggle. We shall give up this struggle only when our dead body is extricated from the debris of a crashed aircraft. Indian Air Force will be formed and we shall continue with this struggle. It appears to be a pleasant job. At no time has it pained me except when seeing, or cremating dead

comrades". A broad smile came on Mukerjee's face. "My ideas are the same as yours. Shall I inform Bouchie accordingly" he replied, as I pulled a sheet on top of me and continued with the midday siesta.

Bouchie admired our feelings and wrote a strong note in an unofficial capacity to A.H.Q. He informed A.H.Q. that his personal views were the same as those of the Indian Officers. He will continue with the Indian Air Force till success is achieved. He was confident that the dark days were over and success was near at hand.

A very vigorous training programme was chalked out. Philip would chalk out a day's training programme which would be approved by Bouchie. Philip was an exceedingly good pilot. He could almost do everything better than we could except mosaic photography which as a team Aspee and I had perfected to a precision.

With hard work Bouchie managed to procure an additional Wapiti fitted up with Bristol 8 F.P. engine. This was really superb as she developed forty horse power more than the other Wapitis fitted with 8 F. engines. Total horse power was 450.

One fine morning Bouchie walked into the hanger twirling a small cane in his hand. This was December 1934. "News has come from Air Head Quarters that our flight is going to cooperate with Sind Brigade in their annual manoeuvres on the Hab river. We have only a week more of intensive training before the blue and red forces deploy across the Hab plain in a practice battle". We quickly got all the map sheets and message pads ready in the pucca army cooperation fashion as learnt at the school of army cooperation Old Sarum.

The actual day arrived when Sind Brigade under Brigadier Wilson was deployed on the Hab plain into a blue and red force engaged in sham warfare. There were two Baluch battalions of infantry, one British infantry battalion; The Royal Sussex regiment, a battery of mountain artillery, a detachment of armoured cars and all the rest of ancilliary troops belonging to Sind Brigade.

Bouchie in his polished Sparkling white overalls disappeared over the horizon as the first sortie with the Blue force. We were all cooperating with the Blue force

against the Red which was attacking Karachi from its advanced position in the Lass Bela hills. Bouchie was a most capable fighter boy of the 1914-18 days. In France he flew everything from a camel to D.H. 9A. He was qualified in engaging enemy in a dog fight and shooting him down. Army cooperation where a poor pilot is a glorified clerk in the cockpit, observing and writing messages and eventually fighting his way out of enemy attackers was a new field for him. However, it was most creditable how Bouchie used to write his army cooperation messages.

On this particular day Bouchie reappeared over the aerodrome after a two hour sortie. I was the next pilot to relieve him. But my orders were not to take off till Bouchie landed and gave me all the gen on the deployed red force after their advanced elements had crossed the Hab river four miles East of Hab Chowki. I was dressed up in a spotlessly clean overall with my favourite Wapiti K1260 on the apron waiting for Bouchie's arrival. He was quite excited after having spotted almost the whole of the red force in a very vital position. Bouchie produced a two page message, reporting the red infantry, cavalry, mules and men all jumbled up together. It was a very unorthodox army cooperation message which would have annoyed an army cooperation instructor like Flight Lieutenant Schofield or Squadron Leader Cole Hamilton and Flight Lieutenant Moreton of the school of Army Cooperation. However, it was a most commendable effort on the part of a fighter boy to have spotted the whole of the enemy force and plotted it on a map.

"What I would like you to do" said Bouchie to me "is to go straight to the point two miles East of Hab Chowki. Forward elements of the red force are making a very rapid advance. Their shadows and mules are giving them away verp easily. Spot the whole lot. After you have compiled the first five messages regarding their advance guard and the main body; pass the passages on R/T to our Blue Brigade advanced Head Quarters marked three quarter moon on the map. Flight Sergeant Groom and LAC Mackenzie have their wireless van stationary near the three quarter moon position in the field. Do not give your own position away by dropping messages

at our H.Q. Pass messages by R/T to our brigade H. Q. in the field. R/T is definitely good. You can hear Flight Sergeant Groom, strength 5. Collect maximum number of messages. Then pass these on R/T. At the end of two hours sortie please drop the original messages on the base camp at Hab Chowki. There is a three quarter moon sign near the Brigadier's tent on the Hab river. Next door, there are about two thousand mules tied up. For God's sake do not come below two hundred feet. I do not want mules to be frightened and breaking away into the desert. Fire a green vary light before dropping a message".

I climbed into the cockpit and started up K1260. R/T was plugged in. After take off I tested with Corporal Edmond in the wireless cabin next to our hanger. Corporal Edmond's strong Yorkshire accent could be heard miles away "Peony 5-this is Peony zero. Hearing you loud and clear. How do you hear me" To this I replied "Peony zero. This is Peony five. Loud and clear. Proceeding to battle area. Please inform advance brigade H.Q. Shall establish R/T contact after four minutes", almost instantaneously I heard Flight Sergeant Groom's voice talking to corporal Edmond, in a typical English accent. "Peony Zero this is advanced Brigade H.Q. Understand Peony five proceeding on sortie two. Roger. Can see Peony five appearing over the Mangho Pir hills. Shall establish R/T contact".

Over the hills of Mangho Pir I gained an altitude of three thousand. Orders were that during reconnaissance no aircraft will be flown below 3,000 feet. I reached the spot which Bouchie had shown me. Sure enough, red force was advancing in large numbers. Shadows and mules were giving away position very easily. I quickly wrote down the first three or four messages on the message pad strapped to my right knee. Then I called up advanced Brigade H.Q. "Blue force H.Q. this is peony five, Four messages for you." Instantaneously came that never erring voice of British Flight Sergeant Groom, across the desert. "Peony five. This is blue force H.Q. Pass your four messages. Pass your four messages. Over".

After two hours reconnaissance, at least twenty messages pertaining to the movement of red force were written down and passed on radio telephony. R31B radio set was working exceedingly well. On the conclusion of my sortie I reached the base camp at Hab Chowki and descended down to two hundred feet. I asked A.C. Ranjit Singh in my back seat to fire a green vary light as I came over the three quarter moon sign. About two thousand mules belonging to the R.I.A.S.C. bucked and careered. I dropped the message in a coloured cloth bag. A Sepoy picked it up as I banked my Wapiti over the Hab river and headed back home.

Bouchie had come back after lunch. Aspee was walking up and down the apron in a white overall with silver buttons and the squadron badge consisting of blue and black squares pinned in the centre of the pocket and the I.A.F. Wing on top. I explained the whole situation and the latest position of troops. Aspee took off in a third aircraft and was very soon calling up Blue force H.Q. "Blue Force this is Peony six- How do you receive me?"

We continued with cooperation with Sind Brigade for a fortnight. Brigadier Wilson, commanding the brigade was exceedingly pleased with our work. A good report was sent to Air Headquarters. During the fortnight we carried out at least six daily sorties of two hours each on tactical, artillery, and photographic reconnaissance. Exceedingly good vertical photographs of troops moving in the field and under camouflaged positions were taken. Tactical reconnaissance was exceedingly effective as we communicated information regarding every movement of even smaller nature. It appeared that a dark shadow was lifting from the horizon of the Indian Air Force.

Air Headquarters must have been pleased with Brigadier Wilson's report. Within a month orders came from Air H.Q. that 'A' flight No. 1 Squadron was to move to Hyderabad Sind for carrying out artillary shoots with a brigade of the Royal Artillary stationed at that place. Philip was to command the flight. Mukerjee, Aspee and I were the remaining three pilots. Everyday a battery of the Royal Artillery would move into position across the river Indus after crossing Kotri bridge. Ranges were in

existance towards the hills at a distance of approximately ten miles North-West of Kotri railway bridge. Philip carried out the first shoot. He was a seasoned pilot of No. 20 Squadron R.A.F. and had carried out many live shoots during the frontier operations of 1933. In fact Philip had a full doze of Mohmand operations of 1933. Nahakki pass was as well known to Philip as his native town in England.

Philip asked me to carry out the second shoot. Those days artillery shooting was carried out by means of one way W/T and a T32 transmitter. Target was marked on the ground. The battery engaging the target displayed their identity by ground strips. On reaching the target and locating one's own battery, a pilot quickly noted down the pin points and transmitted information regarding the target to our battery. An R.A.F. mule pack set consisting of a receiver and a small steel tubular aerial were stationed with the battery. Pilot transmitted all information regarding the target and conduct of shoot to the battery with the help of a morse key and T32 transmitter. The battery or the Air Force party consisting of a small truck or a mule as the case might be; a receiver and two men, communicated to the pilot by means of ground strips. On this occasion Corporal Edmond, and LAC Mackenzie two of the R.A.F. personnel attached to the I.A.F. were manning the ground set. I have forgotten whether they had a mule with them or a small mobile truck. Both Corporal Edmond, and LAC Mackenzie inspired so much confidence into us that half the shoot was almost won by spotting them siting on a sand dune with ground strips arranged on the ground.

I asked A.C. Ranjit Singh to reel out the aerial from the back cockpit. At least two hundred feet of aerial wire with lead weights was reeled out. A.C. Ranjit Singh stood up in the back seat and touched me on the back. "Sir, aerial has been reeled out". I switched on the transmitter. Five minutes were given for warming up. Radio sets of those days required at least five minutes for warming up otherwise you pressed the morse key and nothing happened. I had my helmet plugged in for side tone. My speed used to be about ten words a minute.

Without the side tone it became very difficult to know what you transmitted. Using the artillery code I sent down all information regarding the target repeating the coordinates in the first line of the message and then in the second line. A stop watch was strapped to my left knee and an artillery message pad to my right knee. I pressed the stop watch after the completion of my first message and then target number. Immediately the stop watch registered four minutes, I sent the code word for 'Fire'. At that time a pilot has to remain over the target and manoeuvre the aircraft in order that the target is not obscured by the spreading wings of a Wapiti. A Salvo of shells arrived on the target at a distance of three hundred yards in a southerly direction. I immediately transmitted the location of salvos. I pressed the stop watch once again and after a minute asked the battery to 'Fire'. A single shot arrived at a distance of one hundred yards south of the target. I transmitted the location, and pressed the stop watch. After every twenty seconds a shell burst in the near vicinity of the target. Apparently each gun was being corrected for the centre of the target. It was really surprising to find that all the four guns registered hits within twenty five yards of the target. And these guns were relics of the first world war 1914-1918. A range of two to three miles was being used. After completing the shoot I landed at the old landing ground near the town. This landing ground has now disappeared into cultivated land. Bholari has been developed in its place.

Several artillery shoots were carried out, Between Philip Haynes, Mukerjee, Aspee and myself. We carried out three to four live shoots each. A very good report was given by the officer commanding artillery brigade R.A. Hyderabad. Air Headquarters appeared to be pleased. At Karachi, Majumdar, Narendra and Daljit Singh were getting on with their training. P/O Ranganadan had arrived by February 1935. He had passed out from the R.A.F. college and had also completed his training at the school of army cooperation Old Sarum. We were definitely getting on.

The dust at the landing ground Hyderabad (Sind) was so terrific and the tent life was so miserable that Aspee and I decided on a plan of holiday making. We

flew our aircraft to Drigh Road and then put in for twenty days leave. It was granted. Those days Bombay was the only place if you wanted a good leave. Aspee and I took a train from Hyderabad (Sind) to Luni Junction and then changed for Ahmadabad and Bombay. Weather was really nice when we reached Bombay.

We booked rooms at a good hotel. After a very refreshing bath and change of clothes, Aspee and I listened to some good music in an adjoining restaurant and ordered iced orange squash. Evening lights began to flicker in the streets down below. This restaurant was getting crowded. Some very good looking dames arrived in the restaurant. It looked as if we had turned up in a palace from the tents at Hyderabad landing ground.

Aspee and I were like two country yeokels let loose in a big town. Aspee was engaged to a very pretty girl. She arrived within a short time. So Aspee was happy and disappeared with her in a motor car. I remained in this restaurant till almost dinner time. I stared at every pretty woman that came in or went away. Like a long lost wanderer over the desert, I found great comfort and delight in watching everything that looked beautiful. Gaily dressed women with exquisite jewellery, appeared to be a most charming sight. Soft music, well illuminated promenade near the gateway of India and the gentle hissing of the waves as these broke on the shore line gave me an unknown pleasure.

Later at night, I came to know a young woman in the dance at Taj Mahal. She was a very interesting person; good looking and full of sex appeal. We went round the dance floor of Taj Mahal in a captivating tune of a slow waltz. This woman looked into my eyes several times. She pressed her body close to mine till I could almost feel the throb of her heart close to mine. The evening was nice and cool. Cold wintry sweat trickled from my forehead in huge drops which I kept on wiping with my handkerchief. She kept on telling me-"You are very shy and in-experienced. You are very young". She encouraged me all the time but I like a little fool was frightened all the time. Suppose she tells her friends that I was a great flirt then the name of Indian Air Force will be spoiled. My entire body and soul was on fire but

throughout the dancing I did not squeeze her even once. I must have been a great disappointment to this young woman. Flying Officers of the future generations will learn a lesson from our mistakes in life. High morals have to be maintained at all times. An officer has always got to be an officer and a gentleman but if a young dame wants a little happiness, this must always be provided.

That night when she wished me good night, I could see disappointment and unhappiness written all over her face. Next day I looked for her all over the Taj Mahal. But she was with another boy friend. I expect she wanted a boy more bold in sex matters than what she fouud in an inexperienced flying officer of the Indian Air Force.

Years have passed, when I think of the episode now, I say to myself-"What a B.F.I. used to be as far as sex matters were concerned". But to that woman I can say one thing; "Wherever you are, If on that night you could have peeped into my heart, body and soul; it was more full of emotion, and sex than any other young man within the shores of India".

By April 1935 an additional aircraft was added to our 'A' flight consisting of four Wapitis. This was necessary because without it, four junior officers i. e. P/Os Majumdar, Narendra, Daljit Singh and Henry Runganadan could not be trained. Summer routine consisted of reporting on duty at 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. Breakfast 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. Ground work, lectures on armaments, signals, photography and reconnaissance from 10.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Lunch in the officers' mess Drigh Road at 1 p.m. Siesta from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Tea at 4 p.m. Wash at 4.30 p.m. and then hockey with our troops.

By the year 1935 we had established ourselves in the field of military Hockey and Athletics tournaments. I organised the team from May 1933. In two years time we won the Sind Brigade Hockey championship and also did exceedingly well in the Brigade Athletics. I captained both the teams and remained Captain of the I.A.F. Hockey and Athletics teams till June 1944 when I left the Air Force and came over to Civil Aviation. During all our Hockey matches, Sheila Finglas; pretty eighteen years old daughter of Captain Finglas, provided inspiration

for the game. Captain Finglas was in charge of the R101 hanger establishments at Karachi Airport. We were great friends. He liked the Indian Air Force a lot. Everyday all of us used to be at Fingie's house. His pretty daughters Sheila and Patricia prepared very good tea and ice cream. They had tennis court at their house at the Karachi Airport. After a strenuous game of hockey with the troops, we used to drive upto Karachi Airport and play tennis with Captain Finglas, Sheila and Patricia. Mukerjee and Patricia against Sheila and myself used to be a very popular encounter.

Patricia and Sheila went away to Quetta where they had a beauty salon opened up. About the middle of May 1935, Fingie came to me in a terrible condition. He had sorrow all over his face. There was a most devastating earth quake at Quetta; almost as devasting as the atom bomb burst in Hiroshima. The entire city was destroyed. Thousands were killed as houses collapsed instantaneously. Men, women, and children lay burried in debris of collapsed roofs and walls. Out of a population of one hundred thousand civilians, very few were left without injuries. Forty thousand were killked. Aproximately forty thousands received major injuries and were retrieved from the debris. Twenty thousand received minor injuries and shock.

Both Patricia and Sheila were burried under debris of their house. Fingie wanted news of them and help. Hangers had collapsed at the R.A.F. station Quetta where No. 5, and 31 squadrons were housed. There were big fissures in the surface of kutcha landing area. Aerodrome was rendered unserviceable. A small strip was located and marked out where up country bomber squadrons from Risalpur, Kohat, and Peshawar were made to land when bringing medical supplies e.g. anti-tentus serum and bottles of milk and bread. Two R.A.F. Wapiti squadrons from Kohat, two R.A.F. Hart Squadrons from Risalpur and one R.A.F. Audax Squadron from Peshawar had taken off with supplies of medicines and food. 'A' flight I.A.F. was told to stand by at Karachi. British Govt. of India's immediate relief measures were being organised from Delhi. Flight Lieutenant Silvester was to take off immediately from Karachi to Quetta in order to find out the situation. Only

a kutcha strip was available at Quetta for landing. The main aerodrome had developed big cracks and was subsequently rendered unserviceable for aircraft operations. Railway line between Mach and Quetta was smashed up. Telegraph and telephone poles were down between Sibi and Quetta. It appeared that when God desires destruction of the Human race; he makes a good job of it.

No one could reach Quetta by road or rail. Force of earthquake twisted hill torrents on to roads and tracks with the result that many breaches were made and roads were rendered unserviceable upto a distance of one hundred miles from Quetta. Cantonment area in Quetta was untouched. In fact some army officers turned up at the R.A.F. aerodrome early in the morning for watching an army exercise and a scheme of flying with the R.A.F. They were surprised to find the aerodrome smashed up and they were equally surprised to find that the entire town was destroyed.

I promised Fingie if I went to Quetta I shall go to Sheila's house and render as much help as possible. Army at Quetta which consisted of a whole division including the famous Indian units of 16th Cavalry and 5/8th Punjab Regt, were busy in excavating debris and rubble and putting together Human flesh and bones. On top of this colossal Human suffering, the hill tribes consisting of thousands of wild tribesmen came down the hills and carried out a most ruthless loot and plunder. Eventually orders were given to shoot a tribesman at sight if he was seen or suspected of looting. Several tribesmen were shot by the army and hung up on trees. Vultures and wild birds screamed in the hills. Stench from thousands of rotten Human bodies which could not be retrieved from a massive debris filled the atmosphere.

Silvester popularly nicknamed Silvo, by Bouchier was Officer in Charge Test and Despatch flight. Eventually Silvo left for Quetta in his golden eagle Wapiti K1272, patched up with fabric in about two hundred places. Silvo searched for Patricia and Sheila and eventually found that Patricia was dead and Sheila was safe in the military hospital. This news cut poor Fingie in two. R.A.F. Squadrons gave extra-ordinary help in flying up medicines and food supplies etc. One of the biggest

devastations known to Human race had been completed at Quetta. That beautiful valley enclosed by the high mountains Chiltan, Takatu and Murdar Gar was completely destroyed. It took nearly seven days to complete road and rail links. Thousands of woe stricken, wounded and terrified men, women and children were evacuated from Quetta. Within fifteen days, that beautiful valley once a pride of Indian cities and cantonments was a picture of utter desolation. Only crows and kite hawks hovered over the tumbled down, town.

No. 5 and 31 Squadrons R.A.F. moved down to Drigh Road. Their planes were flown and their equipment followed by train a month later when woe stricken civil population or rather the few remnants of the civil population, had been evacuated towards the Punjab and Sind. Officers mess was full. Doubling up had to be resorted to in many of the rooms except those of the senior officers like Bouchier, Silvo, Squadron Leader Norton, and Flight Lieutenant Bill Bourne etce. Ladies room and the library was full of junior R.A.F. officers like Jock Burroughs etc. Approximately twenty of them slept in the ladies room.

At about midnight, on the first day, a goods train rumbled past the officers mess at a distance of about eight hundred yards towards the south. The rumbling noise sounded exactly the same to the junior officers sleeping in the ladies room as that of the rumbling which preceded Quetta Earth Quake. Within a flash all of them jumped up from their sleep and ran out towards the golf course. There was loud laughter when they saw the head lights of a goods train.

In November-December 1935 artillery liason was again carried out with the Artillery brigade R. A. Hyderabad (Sind). We flew down to Hyderabad Sind. Four Wapiti aircraft were picketed outside our tents. A ground testing wireless station and a workshop was established in a tent. In a ten day detachment, exceedingly good results were obtained. Four field batteries carried out their annual shooting. In the air shoots, practically all targets were hit within the first four shots. Brigade Commander was pleased. A good report was sent to Air

Head Quarters where Wing Commander Horsley in charge of operations and training was taking tremendous interest in us.

Sind Brigade tactical exercises commenced in January 1936. Aircraft of No. 5 Squadron R.A.F. and that of A flight No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. took part. No. 5 Squadron were in a bad shape as after Quetta Earthquake they had no home. Their officers and men slept in tents. Their aircraft were strewn all over the aerodrome. Heavy drinking was taken up by all officers and men. Their officers generally remained at the Gymkhana-club till well after midnight. Whisky used to be very cheap, those days. Next morning's efforts could be well imagined. I.A.F. aircraft always left the aerodrome in time and arrived over the Hab river area, tick on time. An aircraft of No. 5 or 31 Squadrons R.A.F. invariably arrived late. Where the R.A.F. aircraft would still be testing out with ground receiver; I.A.F. aircraft had already passed about ten most important messages regarding the enemy on the other side with whom the R.A.F. aircraft was cooperating. I.A.F. aircraft always carried out better reconnaisance, with the result that the force with which we cooperated always won the battle. On the ground, same story was being repeated between the British and Indian troops. If a battalion of Baluch regiment was pitched agaist the Royal Wessex regiment; Baluch always won. Of course Baluch battalion 4/10th or 10/10th always had very smart British officers. Colonel Crick; Captain Collins, Major Pattigrew etc. were some of the examples. After every three hours of the battle, Tommy Atkins required a cup of Cha. Baluch troops never stopped for a cup of Cha. "if any is going otherwise Cha will be served tomorrow" was their motto. In a period of ten days of the tactical exercises, a company of the Royal Wessex regiment was captured and recaptured several times by the Baluch troops. Flight Sergeant Groom used to have a good laugh from his radio van when he saw British troops being surrounded by the fleet footed tall and tough Baluchis.

Reconnaissance height was fixed above three thousand feet. One day over the area of the road leading from Mauripur to Hab Chowki, at a place which was in the near vicinity of existing aerodrome at Mauripur; I

saw Flying Officer Hamish Mac White flying a Wapiti aircraft of No. 31 Squadron at a low height of about one thousand feet above the troops deployed in the field. I was maintaining a constant height of three thousand. Our brigade orders were not to come down below a height of three thousand. Blue and the red forces were camouflaged and hidden cleverly in the shadow of hills. Hamish was cooperating with the red force and I was cooperating with the blue force. Brigade Commander got very angry when he saw Hamish floating around so low. He went up to the signals van and asked Flight Sergeant Groom to pass an R/T message to him; not to remain at so low an altitude.

Brigade Commander gave us an exceedingly good report. Air H.Q. were also pleased. In February 1936 we won the Brigade Hockey championship again by beating Baluch regiment and a company of R.I.A.S.C. Wing Commander Horsley at A.H.Q. was very much interested in the I.A.F. By end of February 1936 F/LT Hancock and F/O Wilkins were posted to No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. Drigh Road. Bouchie was asked to commence formation of B flight with Hancock as flight commander, F/O Wilkins as senior instructor, and with P/O's Majumdar, Narendra, Daljit Singh and Henry Ranganadan. Orders were also received that 'A' flight consisting of Philip Haynes as flight commander, F/O Mukerjee, I, and Aspee Engineer were to get new equipment of four new Wapiti aircraft with 8 F.P. engines and fitted up with front gun, rear gun, bomb release gear, message picking up hook and an electric camera. Philip was promoted to the rank of a Flight Lieutenant. Bouchie was promoted to the rank of a Squadron Leader. He really looked smart in long black leather boots and breeches when Secretary of State for Air Lord Londenderry arrived from England for the inspection of R.A.F. and I.A.F. units in India.

A and B flights of No. 1 Squadron were formed. 'A' flight concentrated on night flying by means of goose neck flares, front gun firing with two vickers guns, Lewis gun attacks on ground targets, bombing, photography, artillery cooperation and tactical reconnaissance. Stress was laid on the V.B.L. (Vickers, bomb, Lewis) method of attacking tribesmen. This was for getting in trim for

Frontier Operations where mischief could be expected from the Mohmand, Afridi, or Wazir and Mahsud tribes at any time. Four air gunners, Wali Mohd, Ali Mohd, Ghulam Ali and Mohd Salim were recruited. They were all tough football players from local schools in Simla and the Punjab. Extensive training was given to them to make them fit for frontier operations. Their results were really good with the Lewis gun. It used to be most amusing to see them clean their Lewis guns the whole day after obtaining good hits on the ground targets during the morning's exercise. We always laughed when watching Wali Mohd cleaning his Lewis gun on the bench. His beard used to go up and down. Equally amusing was fitter Uttam Singh who was in the habit of talking to himself when sitting on top of the nose of a Wapiti like riding a horse. You could always make out that he was talking to himself, because from a distance you could see his beard going up and down as he talked to himself.

Our men were in very good shape. I have never seen an N.C.O. or other rank work so hard as Naik Ram Singh, Harjinder Singh, Abdul Salam, Mahboob, Mitra, Sharma, Kartar Singh, Pritam Singh, and Gurumukh Singh. One of the senior most, Keshu had left the service. He was from Southern India and was at one time the senior most of them all.

Second flight under Hancock, and Wilkins, commenced progress from end of February 1936. P/O's Majumdar, Narendra, Daljit Singh, and Henry Rungandan commenced flying with zeal. We all kept in good trim for sports and flying. These were the only things we lived for. Drinking was not permitted. Poor Rungie was beaten up several times for being a bad boy with drinks. I refused to have anything to do with the beat up but still it had no effect. Punishment was awarded in a subaltern's court martial in our own rooms at Gandhi Hill.

In March 1936 Cowasjee Variawa Hockey trophy was won by 1 Squdron I.A.F. This was in addition to the Brigade Championship which we won early in 1936. Being Captain of the team I was really happy. I won the Depot Tennis Singles championship also in 1933,34,35 and 36. There was good competition. Nearly three

thousand British troops were enthusiasts of Tennis at the R.A.F. Depot. Lac Head was the local champion since 1932. I beat him in the finals in 1933 and 34. In the Brigade and Depot athletics also, I.A.F. team did exceedingly well.

Final orders came in March 1936 to pack up all equipment of 'A' flight for Peshawar. Machine guns were tested on the Stop Butts. Bombing gears were fitted. Synchronising gun gears constantinesco were tuned up. This gear permitted firing of two vickers guns through the propellor. Each vickers gun had a rate of firing of twelve hundred bullets per minute. Lewis guns were fitted to the hand manipulated scarf rings of the rear cockpit. Full number of green, white and red vary lights with a vary pistol were fitted to the front and rear cockpits. 'Gulli Chits' or a declaration of the Government of India with the direct consent of Governor General in Council stating that any tribesman whoever brings the pilot and air gunner safe to the nearest British Indian outpost will be rewarded with five thousand rupees were pasted to a pocket on the fuselage in front of the pilot's cockpit. Message picking up hooks were lubricated. 'A' flight aircraft were given an additional coat of paint and colour. Light blue and black squares on both sides of the fuselage and on top of wings were painted up afresh. In fact the four Wapitis of 'A' flight looked like battle chargers ready for combat.

Ground party commenced loading up of trestles, stores, spare engine, W/T equipment etc. on railway wagons. Philip, Mukerjee and I booked our cars by goods train to Peshawar. Philip had a four seater Morris with hood. Mukerjee had a two seater sports Chevrolet 1933 and I had a two seater sports Chevorlet 1934, model. Wagons did not leave till 2 April. Ground party had to leave on 26th March and we were to fly off on the morning of 1st April. Bouchie felt very sorry that 'A' flight which he created from zero was going away. Philip felt happy to command 'A' flight in the operations of N.W. Frontier. Majumdar, Narendra, and Rungie looked at us as heroes proceeding to the battle front.

On the evening of 26th April I drove out to Karachi Airport to play Tennis with Captain Finglas and

Sheila. After sunset, darkness was gradually creeping in, when I reached the mess at Drigh Road with the Tennis racket in my hand, I looked in to see if there were any letters etc, in the pigeon hole. I found Bouchie with a glass of whisky in his hand, pacing up and down the ante room. Mukerjee Engineer and Philip Haynes sat with long drawn faces. "What the hell has happened"? I asked Mukerjee. "Our ground party has been smashed up. A heavy six wheeler open truck has skidded and turned on its back. They are all wounded very badly and are lying by the side of the road about three miles down the road towards Karachi. Ambulance from the M. I. Room has picked up four very badly smashed up troops. The rest are there". This was a pretty grim news. If the men cannot catch the train-we had it! A.H.Q. will cancel the flight to Peshawar. Then God help us! There will be another year of training at Drigh Road. Bouchie was so worried that he would not speak a word nor would he give any orders. "Come on Zaidy-let us run down with our cars and a transport" said Mukerjee. "If we can pick up all the airmen and put them in the train, they will be away to Peshawar before A.H.Q. know what has happened. Then there will be no question of stopping the posting". Like a flash Mukerjee and I raced our cars to the third mile stone from officers mess. In the darkness a heavy truck was lying on its back completely smashed up. Damn fool of a driver tried to avoid a dead dog or jackal on the road and skidded and then rolled over to the left side. Ditches on both sides of the road were filled with nearly sixty men with broken arms and legs. I picked up the nearest man to where my car was halted. It happened to be Corporal Kartar Singh Taunk. He moaned and he groaned as I lifted him up. His leg was smashed up and broken. With the help of two men who were apparently not hurt I placed Kartar Singh in the front and three other men in the Dickey. There was no question of Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh. We were all like brothers and there was no differentiation of class creed or religion in the field. As I started the car I shouted at the men "Come on Jawan-Courage !-either we catch the train from the cantoment station or face a cancellation of posting to Peshawar". Mukerjee's voice also followed "Come on chaps-get moving.! Courage-we are with you"

As my car moved out I saw Mukerjee's car following me with at least five wounded men. In the meantime news went round the camp that I.A.F. officers were helping men to catch the train from the Cantonment Station. Then every I.A.F. driver who was on duty with a truck or Ambulance turned up on the site and helped men in getting to the Cantonment Station. Almost twenty I.A.F. cars and trucks turned up out of working hours. Before the train steamed out, everyone of the ground party except four seriously injured who were taken to the M.I. Room in the camp; were safely placed on board. It speaks so highly of the morale and the confidence that our men had in their officers. A word of courage from us was enough.

On the morning of 1st April 1936, we woke up very early as bed rolls had to be sent to the aerodrome for being tied up in the luggage racks under the main planes. My bearer had already left by train. Revolvers and ammunition could not be sent with the bearers. So we had to carry revolvers with us. It was a court martial offence to lose a revolver on the North West Frontier. The Pathan Loved a colt automatic,. By hook or crook they snatch it if you are not very careful. And then the same revolver is used against you at a later date.

An M.T. truck came up at Gandhi hill and took our bed rolls and suit cases down to the aerodrome. At 6.30 a, m; Mukerjee, Aspee and I walked down Gandhi Hill towards the Aerodrome. As we reached the stone wall boundary of the aerodrome, I looked back at Gandhi hill and quarter No. 1 which was my abode from May 1933. We all felt sorry to leave our old abode, at Gandhi Hill.

In the hanger we quickly slipped into white overalls and got the parachutes and flying helmets out. Clothing was dumped into the rear cockpit. I found LAC Qibla Mahboob had filled up the luggage racks with my bed roll and suit case under the starboard wing and his bed roll and suit cases tied up firmly with a piece of string and fastened to the luggage carrier racks on the port. Punctually at 7 a. m. Philip arrived. After putting on his overalls and helmet, he asked us to start up after shaking hands and saying goodbye to Bouchie, Hancock,

Wilkie, Majumdar, Narendra, Rungie and NCO's of B Flight who had gathered on the tarmac. Aspee took off first followed by me and Mukerjee. Then last of all Philip took off. As pre-arranged we were waiting for him over Clifton. We joined up in tight box formation and came over the aerodrome. Our B flight was called to 'attention' as we came over the aerodrome, and Bouchie gave a terrific salute to the aircraft up above.

After passing over the aerodrome, Philip signalled by hand to move out to a very wide 'V' formation.

We had four hours flight accross the desert to Khanpur and a further three and a half hours to Peshawar from Khanpur. We had throttled down to a steady 95m.p.h, from a maximum speed of 100 M.P.H. Westland Wapiti was an incredible aircraft. She did everything between 90 and 100. Maximum speed was 100. Cruising was 95. Fast landing speed with heavy bombs and luggage was about 85-90. She dive bombed at 90. Straffed at 90. attacked at 90 and fled at 90.

Flight across the desert was very uninspiring. Across inaccessible stretches of the desert, in accordance with A.H.Q. orders; cross country flight had to be conducted along the railway line. We passed Hyderabad (Sind), Padidan, Nawabshah, Khairpur and Sukkur. Sight of the famous bridge across the river Indus at Sukkur broke the monotony of flight over the desert. Occasionally, Aspee, I and Mukerjee passed some rude signals to each other by means of fingers. This provided a little laughter and breaking up of the monotony of slow flight in an open cockpit and blazing sunshine. I put on my tinted glassess as the sun was too strong. On top of a leather flying helmet, I was wearing a flying pith topee which was a standard R.A.F. issue of those days. Head and back of neck was to be protected from the blazing sun.

At Khanpur we got down one by one in the sandy landing ground. Aircraft were left out for refuelling. We took shelter in the chowkidar's hut. There were couple of charpais and a broken wooden bench. It was nice to get out of flying overalls and sprinkle a little cold water on the face and head. A hand operated water pump existed near the chowkidar's hut. Naik Ram Singh, Harjinder Singh and Qibla Mahboob were busy in

refuelling the aircraft from two gallon tin cans of Burmah Shell. I tried to help Qibla, but in refuelling a Wapiti you had to be a juggler and a contortionist. Sitting astride the long nose portion of the fuselage like riding a camel through the desert, you had to bend down as if receiving a message from the ground, in order to pick up a can from Qibla on the ground. The metal portion of the fusiage was so hot that some very vital parts of my anatomy were getting roasted. I gave up. A pilot must conserve his energy for flying. Qibla slept in the back seat and stretched himself out in the interior of the rear portion of fuselage when we were flying.

After refuelling; Ram Singh, Harjinder, and Qibla Mahboob produced a very rich lunch, Qibla's Mrs. had prepared some delicious Puratha and Qima. I made a pig of myself in over eating that rich lunch which can hardly be digested in a long and bumpy cross country.

Starting up Wapitis when hot could only be achieved if you were a magician or a prophet. We had learnt a trick from R.A.F. senior instructors like Warrant Officer Newing, flight sergeant Furlong and Hill, to take out the bottom four plugs of the engine and replace with new or clean ones. Tremendous amount of oil used to drain into the bottom cylinders and foul up the plugs. After replacing the plugs Harjinder Singh, Ram Singh and Qibla worked the bag and rope and pulled the propellors when starting up. Over and over again, the trio heaved at the prop with a bag and rope "One, two-Go". We twiddled the hand starting magneto like the Dickens. There would be a mild bang as the engine was started up.

We took off one by one and joined up in an open "V" formation. From Khanpur Philip steered a course to Multan and then cut across the desert in order to Hit the river Indus. After an hour we came over the river Indus and then my home town D.I.K. Almost everyone in the village of D.I.K, knew that we were going to Peshawar for Frontier operations. I was later told by my father at Peshawar that little children screamed with delight in the streets of D.I.K. to know that the four aircraft were our own and belonged to the Indian Air Force, and one of them was a lad of the village.

Qibla's rich lunch had produced a very mild

headache in a bumpy weather. After passing the hill Sheikh Buddin on our left and the town of Mianwali on our right, we encountered clouds on the left. These appeared to be rain clouds. Philip's original plan was to steer a direct course from the vicinity of Sheikh Buddin to Peshawar, but rain clouds and a bluish black horizon on the left made him change his plan. He followed the Indus.

It had rained during the day in the entire region of Kalabagh, Khushalgarh, Kohat, Bannu and Peshawar. Met officer Dr. Mal's report at Karachi was correct. Philip who was an old Koi Hai for flying in the hills, headed straight for the Kalabagh Gorge. We saw bluish black mountains looming up over the horizon, Philip was getting lower to go through the gorge, but we stuck to our altitude. If you are not used to flying in the hills and mountains-it is really a frightening sight. Mukerjee and I in number two and three positions from the leader would not come down over the Kalabagh gorge. Miles on the left, Aspee was geting higher and higher. I had a hearty laugh, "Aspee, are you doing a balloon ascent or a cross country to Peshawar" I said loudly. As we reached the hills over Kalabagh we noticed that it was a mirage, a peculiar effect of the hills as seen from a distance. We were in fact at least one thousand feet above the hills of Kalabagh. Expert pilots with bags of experience on the Frontier, went through the gorge at Kalabagh and Khushalgarh and then emerged at Attock bridge. Philip was probably trying to do the same. Luckily the clouds became patchy and Philip cut across to the left over the hills of Kohat and the valleys washed with reddish brown hill torrents of the Frontier.

When we came over the aerodrome at Peshawar, we joined up in a tight box formation. It was at half past four, after seven and a half hour's flying that we landed at Peshawar Aerodrome, home of No. 20 Squadron R.A.F. The landing ground was a grass T shaped air strip. Squadron Leader Fairweather O.C. 20 Squadron was at the aerodrome to welcome us. He shook hands with all of us. We were happy that we had arrived at Peshawar where we would get magnificient opportunities of gaining experience with No. 20 Squadron R.A.F. who were a seasoned army cooperation squadron in Frontier Operations.

At Peshawar Cantonment at that time Military formations consisted of the Highland light infantory, a battalion of the 8th Punjab, a battalion of Maharatta light infantry, 8th Cavalry King Edward's own, a mountain battery, a detachment of light tanks and armoured cars, a company of animal transport consisting of mules and camels, a field battery and a few other ancilliary troops.

A fully Indianized infantry battalion, the 5/8th Punjab had been transferred from Peshawar. 5/10th Baluch which was also Indianized, had been transferred to Landi Kotal. During Sundays we used to meet many officers of the 5/10th in the town. Hassan and Sen advised us not to become members of the British Officers Club till full voting rights had been bestowed on Indian Officers. 16th Cavalry and 5/8th Punjab and also all other Indianized units like 6/13 Frontier Force, Rajputana rifles, Hyderabad regiment, 7th Cavalry 7 the Rajput, and 3rd Cavalry had started this struggle to gain full rights at the British Officers club rather than being ordinary stuges. Cooperation between Indian officers was terrific. We promised 5/8th Punjab and 5/10th Baluch and later 16th Cavalry that we shall not set our foot in British Officers club, till full rights had been granted.

Sure as-anything, a note came from Group Captain Bottomley Commanding R.A.F. group Peshawar.

"I would like my Indian officers to become members of the British club at an early date as this will give them a social status amongst senior British officers. This is very important". Philip came to talk to us. But we had been primed by the 5/8th Punjab and 5/10 Baluch already. Group Captain Bottomley tried his best to help us and get us into the club but we stuck to our demand. Later 16th Cavalry and a few other Indianized units arrived at Peshawar. But it was not till the year 1941, during the war when Peshawar cantonment was full of Indian Officers and their wives; exceedingly good in social activities, that the Governor of N.W.F. Province, Sir George Cunningham put his foot down in the club and informed all British box wallas and Defence Service officers that if Indian officers and their wives were not taken as fully authorised members of the British Club; he

would terminate the lease of land. Thus ended a very long controversy of the club barring entry of Indian officers and wives to all social activities.

Within a few days of our arrival at Peshawar the Highland light infantry commemorated the battle of Assaye by holding a ceremonial parade. This regiment was one of the finest units that the British army possessed. Recruited from Glassgow this regiment had some of the finest men and officers that you could see in the Indian army.

Their march past was really magnificient. Those days the Colonel and his adjutant rode on horses in front of lines of troops marching past the saluting base in review order. Scottish bagpipes provided a real martial music.

We became very friendly with the H.L.I, as lieutenants Zaman Kayani and Janjua were posted to that unit. We played Hockey against them several times. H.L.I. were the Brigade champions in Soccer, Hockey, and Athletics.

Soon after our arrival, Philip arranged a few flights over Wazirstan. Aspee and I carried out a few vertical mosaic photographic trips over Razmak, after refuelling at Miranshah. The wild country around Razmak was most fascinating but exceedingly dangerous. Pilots shot down on many occasions were skinned alive and cut into pieces by the tribesmen.

Early in June, I applied for one month's leave. Motor journey through the wild hills of Kohat pass and Bannu was a thrill as I was all alone in my two seater Chevrolet and the tribal territory was hostile to British administration and King's Commissioned officers. Mukerjee disappeared towards Calcutta. Soft music and dim lights of Farpos night club used to haunt him. Philip disappeared on a long trek through the Indus valley. Aspee always swore that an evening walk at Chaupatti Bombay with an eighteen Carat dame by your side was the most exhilarating thing in the world. But I always maintained when arguing with these gentlemen that a morning swim in the river Indus at D.I.K. had no parallel in this universe.

In October 1936 we flew out four aircraft to Rawalpindi (Chaklala) Aerodrome for carrying out cooperation with a division of the army at Pindi. Chaklala

Aerodrome was a small kutcha landing ground about 800 yards X 800 yards. Care had to be exercised in not to ovetshoot as there was a ditch all round the landing ground. No. 5 A.C. Squadron R.A.F. were in tents. Aircraft were also kept under canvas. Flight Lieutenants Reid, Hamblin and Hamish Macwhite were the three flight commanders. Nearly fifteen days of continuous sorties were spent over the areas of Khanpur hills. Nothing spectacular happened. The army took such a hermetical cover under tall trees and growth that nothing could be spotted for days. After a week of continuous flying a few enemy troops werenoticed running from one hill to another. To the army probably it provided some exercise in taking cover from aircraft throughout the day. To us it was a waste of timeto look at trees and shrubs for a period of fifteen days. I wish a few artilliary shoots, photographic reconnaissance of troops advancing in the field, and columns of transport had been thrown in here and there. We were very pleased when this cooperation finished. We had to share tents with No. 5 squadron who still had no home after the Quetta earthquake. It was bitterley cold during the month of October. Fire was lighted but Mukerjee, Aspee and I were still frozen in the morning. Army insisted on a sortie about half an hour before crack of dawn over a most uninteresting area where there was no movement. We had to getup very early but it taught the army a sharp lesson also, as they could not light morning fires for preparing tea. Morning fires can be spotted by aircraft from miles away.

We were very happy when one evening we turned up over the Peshawar vale in a tight box formation. Young Stev was playing golf on the outskits of the town. "Good formation" exclaimed Steve to the Caddies. Steve was a staff officer of Bottomley's famous 223 Group P.A.F. Peshawar.

Officers Mess Peshawar was the most beautiful little place, the British ever built as officer's mess throughout the length and breadth of India. And everyone was so good. Tennis was a regular pastime. Almost all officers and wives played this game. There was no special day fixed for ladies. Tennis marker was on duty from 4-30 to 7 P.M. everyday.

In November 1936 Squadron Leader Chisman took over Command of No. 20 Squadron from Squadron Leader Fair weather. Before command was handed over, Squadron Leader Fair weather led the entire squadron consisting of twelve Audax aircraft and four Wapitis of I.A.F. over Risalpur, and Kohat aerodromes in order to bid farewell to old friends. This was an old Frontier custom. Philip putup a magnificient show in leading four Wapitis to keep up the rear of twelve Audax aircraft. A Wapiti was 10 M.P.H. slower than the Audaxes. We all pushed the throttles through the gate and kept to the rear of the Audaxes in a 'V' formation of 20 Squadron R.A.F.

Fairweather was a magnificient young man; Very kind hearted and helpful. He gave us all the help that we needed. He had a charming wife and two bonnie little children. We were so pleased to meet Fair weather and Mrs. and children at Hampton Court Indian Camp during the coronation of King George the Vi. Mukerjee and I were both in the Indian Coronation contingent. Squadron Leader and Mrs. Fairweather and children had lunch with us in the camp mess. Later we showed them flowers in the gardens of Hamton Court. The two bonnie boys in scottish kilts played with the fountains and water.

It was heart breaking to find that Fair weather was killed in the last World War when leading a night bombing raid over German occupied norwegian Fieurds.

Squadron Leader Chisman popularly called Chisie was a great friend of Philip's. He liked us and helped us a lot.

In November 1936 I flew down to Risalpur where I was to pick up a gunner officer for observing heavy firing on a drogue target towed by F/O Maling from the Depot Drigh Road. I picked up this army gunner officer and soon joined Dick who was flying Silvo's old Golden eagle; Wapiti K1272 to which a huge winch had been fitted for letting out the drogue to a fantastic length.

I formated on Dick over the hills of Nowshera at an approximate height of 14,000 ft. White puffs of smoke began to arrive at the target. These were all round the drogue. The gunner officer was pleased. For one hour we went up and down the artillery ranges above the hills

of Nowshera. Shoot was a great success. It was most creditable to know that as early as 1936 heavy AA guns used to fire so effectively upto good altitudes of 14,000-20, 000 ft. British war equipment at this time was second to none in the world.

By end of November, many Indian officers from 5/10 Baluch Regiment Landi Kotal used to stay in my room on Saturday nights for taking part in the Peshawar vale hunt. Their horses were sent down from Landi Kotal one day earlier. And these army officers could tell some funny stories. Till midnight there used to be laughter in my room. On one occasion they took me to the hunt also. Lieutenant Sen was away on leave. So I used his horse Black valvet who was a wonder. He went over all the jumps with the greatest of ease. We had completed a riding course with the army.

No. 20 A.C. Squadron had a very good Hockey team. Mukerjee and I both played for them. Tennis was more popular game. Our lawns at the mess were beautiful. Maluk, the Tennis marker played a good game of singles.

By end of October and gradually working into the first two weeks of November 1936, we were once again practicising for artillery reconnaissance. No. 20 Squadron had a very fine puff shoot range situated to the right hand side of the Khyber road just past Islamia College. Air observations and the messages passed from the air where compared with the ground records. This was a wonderful exercise and made a man into a fine artillery cooperation pilot.

On about 20th November 1936 I was asked to go down to Hyderabad Sind by train in order to make all preliminary arrangements with the gunner brigade. R.A. officers mess was situated on a hill over looking the old landing ground. I had to stay in a tent as the mess was full. I made immediate arrangements with the adjutant of the R.A. brigade and pitched tents at the landing ground. Old pathan chowkidar at the landing ground was very pleased to see me. He put in additional work in levelling up the sandy ground with the help of two bullocks and a wooden harrow. After a few days the air party arrived with four Wapiti aircraft flown by Philip,

Mukerjee, Habibullah Khan and Henry Runganadan, Aspee had gone to Bombay on leave.

By now our 'B' flight at Drigh Road was making a rapid progress. Additional number of officers had passed out of Cranwell and school of army cooperation Old Sarum. B flight consisted of Flight Lieutenant Hancock, F/O Wilkins, P/O Majumdar, Narandra, Ravi Singh, and Mehar Singh. P/O's Habibullah Khan, and Rungandan had been posted to 'A' flight Peshawar. This was really wonderful. Hancock arranged a reunion of 'A' and 'B' flight at Hyderabad. A game of Hockey was arranged in which 'B' flight beat 'A' flight. After the game, dinner was arranged at the landing ground. It was a very happy occasion. 'B' flight left for Drigh Road next morning.

During a fortnight's shoot, remarkable success was achieved with the gunners. British Artillery instructors and umpires from Quetta measured each and every shell burst on the ground in terms of pilots observations. Brigade Commander was pleased. A very good report was sent to Air H.Q. where Wing Commander Horsley A.F.C. had developed a liking towards Indian Air Force. We flew back to Peshawar where we were once again in the fold of Squadron Leader Chisman and No. 20 Squadron R.A.F.

Xmas was approaching. Peshawar is a Muslim town and Xmas celebrations are unknown to the public. R.A.F. mess and the club were preparing decorations. British officers wives helped everyday. Mrs. Chisman worked hard with the decorations. Peshawar was a lovely mountain garrison of the British empire. It housed only a brigade. Practically all officers were young subalterns or pilot officers. Very few unmarried dames floated around Peshawar. If there was one nice unmarried Popsy floating around the cantonment area, there would be about a dozen cavalieros and about half a dozen flying officers trotting around in circles round her. The wildness of the hills, a cold air, and fragrance of wild roses along the mall and the cantonment area filled a young man's body and soul with strange yearnings.

X'mas came. Dance at our mess was a great success. Our station R.A.F. band was good. During dancing; for each pretty popsy about half a dozen young

birdmen formed a que. Drinks those days were cheap. Every aircraft returning back from Karachi after a complete overhaul, flew a crate of Scotch whisky for the mess. This was permitted. As far as I recollect Chisman had asked Philip to collect a few crates of Whisky from Phipson and Co. Karachi and fly these up in the four Wapitis after termination of our artillery shooting at Hyderabad. Carrying Whiskey on board an aircraft was permitted provided it was a property of the officers mess but drinking on board was strictly prohibited, in accordance with K.R's.

Many a Popsy, went back home with smiles. Birdmen can be really terrific in entertainment and parties. Around the rose bushes in our garden many a happy 'Goodnight' was wished. I still remember the words of joy of one popsy as she said good night to a birdman.

"Good night-Sweetie Pie-happy dreams".

Commencement of New Year 1937 found No. 20 Squadron practising hard for the armament training camp at Karachi. I was the first rabbit to be let loose in front of the hounds. A long cable was attached to my tail to which was tied a big fluttering piece of cloth or rag. I took off with this cable and rag behind me while a whole flight of Audaxes of No. 20 Squadron converged on me for front gun attack above the Khyber pass. This became a daily procedure. Aspee, Mukerjee, Philip, and I towed the rag while our comrades from No. 20 Squadron carried out front and rear gun attacks. 20 Squadron got such a good practice that during the armament training camp they got very good scores on the drogue target. P/O Paddy Cole was the first man to obtain 75 out of 300 in the Vickers quarter attack. All other pilots including S/L Chisman, Hamish Mac White, Lister, Chris Wright, Vernon Harvey, John Coad, Arthur Garland, Arthur Bray, Leslie Cryer, Anderson, Jimmy James and Cox etc. got good marks.

Our turn came in early February 1937. We flew down to Drigh Road for the armament camp. I must admit that our results were disappointing. Philip was the only one who put a bullet or two on the drogue out of a hundred rounds. Method was fantastic. Drogue

towing Wapiti came along the coast and opposite to the direction of the attacking aircraft which had to do a steep turn and a partial dive towards the drogue and open fire when the distance was about 300-400 feet. But the drogue went across the telescopic front gun sights like a Dicky bird disappears from a mango tree.

Our air gunners however got average results. We were all so angry that we were almost in a state of pulling our hair. But with front gun attacks, the more you get into a temper; the poorer results you achieve. There was a feeling of frustration. It took us nearly three years to get the front gun attacks buttoned up. In 1941, during the war when we came to Drigh Road for the armament training camp, we got the best scores in the entire R.A.F. Command in India. Out of eight British R.A.F. Squadrons and one I.A.F. Squadron, with in the Indian command, our results in front gun attacks on drogue, rear gun attacks and live bombing were the best.

Before we flew back to Peshawar in the first week of February 1937, our B. flight returned back to Drigh Road from army cooperation duties with an army Brigade at Bangalore. Wilkie, Majumdar, Narendra, Ranganadan and Ravi Singh had spent about a month at Bangalore. They carried out tactical, artillery and Photographic reconnaissance with the army brigade. They were full of stories. Rungie had met a pretty South Indian girl at Banglore and had got engaged. Wilkie was engaged to Margo William's Diana's pretty sister at Drigh Road. B flight were getting on the happy road to matrimony. Hank was also very popular with many a pretty popsy in Karachi and Drigh Road. In fact, everyone thought, he would announce his engagement at any moment. Poor Hank was several years later killed in war, during 1939-1940.

We returned back to Peshawar in the middle of severe cold in February 1937. Last hanger next to the station stores was ours. We used to keep the fire burning in pilots room. Sufaid Koh range and Mohmand hills were covered with snow. Once a month routine reconnaissance was carried out over Afridi Tirah and the Mohmand territory. Tremendous experience is required for leading a formation over tribal territory where there are no land marks. One hill looks to be as grim as a neighbouring

hill. And there are thousands of hills and peaks covered with snow. Several streams called Khwar or Algad flow from these mountains. Anything below 16,000 feet is called a hill.

Routine reconnaissance over Afridi Tirah and the Mohmand territory was exceedingly interesting. Orders from Group Headquarters included special care and concentration on the territory under Khan of Khar and Khan of Nawagai. A blood fued had existed between the two tribal Khans or Feudal Lords for a long time. If Khan of Khar killed fifty men of Khan of Nawagai; the latter would retaliate. One of the two had good relations with the British. So aerial reconnaissance had to be kept up in order to safeguard that a hundred villages under one Khan were not wiped out by the second Khan. If I remember correctly one of them had mounted a four inch primitive type of field gun manufactured locally; on top of his watch tower.

Group Head Quarters never informed the policy being followed by the British in the tribal territory. Blood fueds existed between many tribal chief tains. One tribe clashed against the other and hundreds were killed. Raids were carried out against settled districts of India. Valuable property and herd of cattle were driven into the tribal hills where no one could venture. After carrying out these raids, hordes of tribesmen fled into the hills. No one could do a thing. Frontier constabulary, Militia and scout posts existed along the foot hills. Thesc were in the shape of small forts with a high watch tower. Scouts, Militia and Frontier Constabulary, recruited from the same areas and under strict British Military discipline and training were instrumental in stopping many small raids but still there was nothing to stop large scale raids. Only the R.A.F. and I.A.F. used to follow up the raiders right upto their mud villages behind a curtain of snow hills and literally knock hell out of the whole tribe.

My own district of D.I.K. within the limits of settled administration of the British Empire suffered a lot from the tribal marauders. Malik Haji Sarfaraz a big land lord who lived in our neighbourhood was kidnapped by the Wazirs, when out one night inspecting his lands on the outskirts of tribal territory. He was imprisoned in a

cave near Razmak and tortured till a ransom of ten thousand rupees was paid by his relations and Political authorities. For three months he lived in a mountain cave high up in the hills of Razmak. A loaf of bread and a glass of water was given to him at each meal time. He slept in that cave and he used the same cave as a lavatory for three months. When he was taken out of the cave on receipt of ransom, he was so ill with dysentry and other diseases that the poor man was in bed for months.

In Kohat cantonment a gang of tribesmen broke into the house of a British Colonel. His pretty young daughter about eighteen, was kidnapped by the notorious tribal outlaw Ajab Khan. One man two women, and a male servant were killed and wounded in the house. The raiders were tracked into the Bagh Valley of Afridi Tirah. Two Wapiti squadrons from Kohat Literally knocked hell out of the Bagh valley in obtaining release of Miss Ellis after a month's blocade and bombing of the valley.

Many buses and cars were ambushed along the road to Bannu. My wife's uncle was shot just outside the town of Bannu by a gang of tribesmen armed to the teeth. The bus carrying him was ambushed and all occupants were slaughtered. He was still a student at Islamia College Peshawer and was in no way hostile to the tribesmen. Waziri tribe was angry with British administration of the tracts of land adjoining Wazir territory. So to express their anger, they shot up innocent occupants of a civil passenger bus travelling between Peshawar and D.I.K.

There are innumerable examples to prove that the tribesman was really naughty and needed a thorough punishment. But the British were too lenient with them. If these days under the independent administration of Pakistan, a young unmarried girl like Miss Ellis was lifted from a cantonment town and taken away one hundred miles into Afridi Tirah, I am quite positive that we shall play up hell with the tribesmen.

The British permitted only gentle action. No village was bombed. Only in extreme cases of open warfare between the British and the tribesmen, a village or two like Arsol Kot and Gulzamir Kot in the Shaktu

valley of Waziristan were completely bombed and altogether destroyed after red leaflets had been dropped and twenty four hour's notice was given to evacuate all women, children and cattle before aerial bombing commenced. I shall describe this incident later as I was the pilot who dropped red leaflets on Arsol Kot and Gulzamir Kot, home of Fakir of Ipi.

During end of February 1937 we took off in formation from the grassy patch of Peshawar aerodrome. Very soon we had crossed the Kabul river and were heading for the Mohmand territory for a routine reconnaissance as ordered by Group Captain Bottomley O.C. No. 1 Indian Group R.A.F. Peshawar. This group consisted of two R.A.F. Hart bomber squadrons located at Risalpur, two R.A.F. Wapiti bomber squadrons located at Kohat, No. 20 Army Cooperation Audax Squadron located at Peshawar and 'A' flight No. 1 A.C. Squadron I.A.F. located at Peshawar.

We were carrying no bombs. Every pilot carried reconnaissance message pads, and wireless. I carried a camera. First we came in Vic formation over the famous Nahakki pass where Brigadier Auchinleck later C-in-C India had put up a magnificient show against the whole of the Mohmand tribe. These were the famous Mohmand operations of 1933-35 for which many a British officer wears a decoration on his chest. Auchinleck commanded Peshawar Brigade. Fighting in the Nahakki pass was exceedingly tough. There were many hand to hand fights and large scale pitched battles against the Mohmand tribe. Casualties were heavy on both sides. Without the help of the Air Force, Peshawar Brigade would have been annihilated in the Nahakki pass as the might of the tribesmen was terrific. Thousands of them possessed modern long range rifles of European manufacture. These weapons have drifted across to the tribel territory through Russia and Afghanistan.

I took some vertical photographs of the old camp site which accommodated thousands of men and mules during the operations of 1935. On our way I took many more photographs of important villages and mud forts etc. Four of us had gained considerable altitude by the time we reached the mud fort of Khan of Khar. Philip signalled

to break off formation. I was to take three vertical photographs from a height of 8,000 feet. These vertical photographs were to include the mud fort of Khan of Khar and the entire village. Then four miles further up the valley, I had to take another three vertical photographs of the mud fort and villages of Khan of Nawagai. Cameras of those days required a little juggling about. I asked Photographer Gurmukh Singh in my back seat to level up the camera. Then I commenced runs over the mud fort of Khar. Several attempts had to be made as in a country full of high hills, it is quite a tricky affair to watch a mud fort through the centre and bottom of your own cockpit from which the panel has been completely removed for purposes of photography. A mud fort looks like a mud fort when you see it from an open cockpit, but you try to locate it and at the same time manoeuvre your aircraft to fly on top of it by watching the mud fort through the centre and bottom of an open cockpit. It is quite a job!

I was very happy to obtain some good shots. Then I proceeded to the Kot of Khan of Nawagai, and commenced vertical photographs and a vertical line overlap. Philip was to carry out reconnaissance and a special report on the state of crops in the Mohmand territory. Mukerjee was to report on the condition of cattle and fodder etc. Aspee was towork Popham panel with a few Militia and Frontier constabulary outposts along the Durand line of high hills which separated India from Afghanistan. All four of us were busy with individual tasks.

When I finished my task, I gained altitude and came over the Swat river which was our randezvous. There was no sign of Philip, Aspee or Mukerjee. What had happened was that all of them were busy at the prearranged altitudes in doing their own tasks. Aspee was working the ground Pophaum panel code with the Militia outposts on the Durand line. From a distance it appeared to Philip that Aspee was drifting across the Afghan border. This was dangerous as those days Afghans did not hestitate in opening fire on any Indian or R.A.F. aircraft; with machine guns and rifles if their border was violated. If the Afghans had opened fire, our Militia and scout posts would also have retaliated with counter machine

gun (Vickers Berthea) fire from the watch towers of our outposts. This was to be avoided at all cost, as a small battle started up at the outposts might have flared up into a bigger show. Group's orders were exceedingly strict. A pilot was to be Court Martialled if he flew over the Durand line; leave alone, violation of Afghan border.

So Philip trotted off towards Aspee and joined up with him. There was a waving of arms, and hands and fingers between Philip and Aspee. Those days radio telephony did not exist between aircraft to aircraft, therefore all types of signs and gestures had to be made to make the other birdman understand what was happening or what was required. Zogging was a morse code by hand by moving an arm and fist outside the cockpit. But this was generally slow and difficult. So on important occasions you merely waved your arms and hands, and fingers. Made signs and gestures, and jumped up and down the cockpit, chattering like a monkey to yourself and the other man. This had better effect than any radio telephony of modern days. The other pilot always understood that something was wrong and then both of you branched off on a desired course.

I looked in all directions and circled over the randezvous for ten minutes but there was no sign of Philip, Aspee or Mukerjee. That very day my younger brother Ayub who was a Commissioned Police Officer with the Frontier Constabulary, was supposed to check up a constabulary outpost and fort at Swat. I was on my way back home to Peshawar. I found my brother's car parked on the road in a narrow gorge leading up to the constabulary post and fort. An army cooperation pilot of those days always carried the Pophaum panel code book in his overall pockets. I took the book out and fired a green vary light. Immediately, Popham panel code was spread out in the open. Each message was acknowledged with a waggling of wings. "All is well" was given to me and I set course for Kabul river; eventutually coming over Risalpur.

When I landed at Peshawar I found that Philip, Aspee and Mukerjee had just landed about five minutes ahead of me. I was in a temper. "Christmas!- you left

me there and bogged off. It is a good show that I knew my way back home otherwise I would still have been trotting up and down the Durand line near Khan of Nawagai's Kili". I said to the three of them.

I forgot to mention that about May 1936, Bouchie was posted to England. Hank took over as Squadron Commander of No. 1 Squadron. Wilkie was also promoted to the rank of a Flight Lieutenant. Lucky man! He was promoted as Flight Commander of our "B" flight at Drigh Road and he also got married to pretty Margo Williams, Diana's younger sister. "B" flight were doing exceedingly well. P/O Mehar Singh was the latest addition to "B" flight. Mehar was a first class sportsman and flier. Before joining the R.A.F. College Cranwell, he had played Hockey for the Punjab University. At Cranwell, he was definitely the best pilot in his term and should have easily won Grove's memorial trophy for flying but for the fact that some one at the Air Ministry had debarred all colonials from competing in the Grove's Memorial trophy; after Aspee had won it in 1933.

Mehar was an incredible shot also. During patridge shooting one day across the Malir river in February 1937, Hank, I, aspee, Majumdar and Narendra had all of us fired at a brown patridge that went flying zig zag across a line of beaters. We all missed it successively. Then there was a loud report from Mehar's gun as the patridge had almost disappeared over the horizon. It fell like a stone to the ground. This used to be Mehar's favourite trick when out patridge shooting. He would keep his gun down and wait till every one had a crack and missed. Then with one bang he would bring the patridge down when it had almost disappeared over the horizon.

I shall write a few pages on exploits of Mehar Singh nick named by me; Mehar Baba. He was a flier of supernatural capability. One man who did not know what fear was. One man I have ever seen in the Air Force whose senses were supernatural. His eyesight was better than anyone else. Sense of touch, hearing and small was more pronounced than any other individual. Mehar could eat like an ox. One whole bottle of whisky had no effect on him. Every liquid was drunk from a large glass tumber. Coffee, tea, coca, whisky or orange

squash. He believed that drinking water was unhygienic for the stomach. One day in Arakaan during World War II, I saw Mehar put away four glasses of whisky and soda before dinner. Then he ate four full plates of hot curry and rice, and one whole chicken. He later ate a full plate of bread and egg pudding. A full glass of tea was drunk on top. A little after dinner; and then Mehar took two bara glasses of whisky. Then some one offered him a glass of orange squash. Mehar, finished this in a gulp muttering 'never refuse a good offer'. We came to the basha hut. Mehar's orderly Dhanna Singh prepared hot cocoa. A glass was offered to me. I only took a cup. Mehar took a glass.

Early in the morning when I woke up, my mosquito net was full of large malarial mosquitos that had bitten me mercilessly throughout the night. There were large blisters all over my body. Mehar was still fast asleep, and there was a line of dead mosquitos all round his charpai. When he woke up he said "Mosquitos never attack me. If they do so, it is to their own detriment; because there is quite a lot of explosive material within me". "I should think so" I replied. "Look at the line of dead mosquitos all round your bed. I think they were on a wrong target".

Mehar had no time for any dames. Even in a mess at Bhopal, Ranchi, or Baigachi where good looking dames were a novelty in the jungle; Mehar would avoid them like poison. Once at Bhopal, a pretty girl, Evelyn, got nearer to Mehar in the bar, knowing well that Mehar did not like dames. When Mehar saw Evelyn getting nearer to him he shot out to the other end of the bar. Then Evelyn followed him to that end. Mehar shot off to this end. This went on for half an hour till Mehar got so browned off with this dame that he shot out of the bar altogether and went away to his tent.

Mehar's flying stories will cover a lot but at present I am only concerned with writing a few pages relating to the early days of Indian Air Force.

During March 1937 a few successful exercises were carried out with Peshawar and Nowshera brigades. I had completed one month's attachment with 5/10th Baluch regiment at Landi Kotal. This battalion had done a

wonderful job of work in the Mohmand operations of 1935. Colonel Mardell commanded the batalion. Major Durrant, Echlin, and Mountain commanded the three companies. This batallion had a very good collection of Indian officers. Ibn-i-Hassan, Sen, Gulzar, Som Dutt, Habibullah Khattak, Takht Singh, and Usman were exceedingly friendly types.

In March on a Sunday morning, Mukerjee and I were sitting in deck chairs in the Tennis lawns when Philip brought a signal and good news from Air Headquarters. Two officers and one airman were to go to England along with the Indian Coronation chntingent which was to take part in the coronation of His Majesty King George the Vi. Mukerjee, Awan and Ghulam Ali were selected. "Hurrah". This was a real good news. New uniforms were ordered from Phelps New Delhi. On 28th March we left for Poona where the Indian Coronation contingent was to assemble prior to reaching Bombay hy a special train and then leaving Bombay in the troopship, H.T. Neuralia;

Indian Coronation contingent was drawn from all Naval, Army and Air Force units. Army had nearly two hundred officers and five hundred troops selected from all units; Punjabis, Baluch, Gurkha, Jat, Hyderabad, Frontier Force, Dogra, Sikh, Marhatta and Cavalry units. Navy was represented by Lieutenant Siddiqe, Chowdhury and two ratings. Air Force was represented by F/O's Mukerjee, self, and A.C. Ghulam Ali. Actually, Navy had a better representation because their sloop H.M.I.S. Indus a very smart ship was also to anchor in the Thames with a full compliment of officers and ratings.

At Poona we stayed at the officers mess 16th Punjab regiment.

About 28th March, our troop train left Poona railway station for Ballard Pier Bombay where H.T. Neuralia had berthed. Poona railway station was quite a sight. It was filled with officers and their wives and friends, who had come to say goodbye. Hundreds of heavy army trucks had filled up the train with luggage. Just after lunch, the train pulled out of Poona railway station. There was a terrific waving of white handkerchiefs from the crowd, at the platform. The train arrived at Ballard Pier and pulled up along side the trroop ship

H.T. Neuralia, just after tea time. It took a few hours to load up the troop ship. Colonel Mac Gregor of Poona Horse was O.C. of the Contingent. Lt Colonel Savoury was second in Command. Senior most Indian Officer was Major Rajendra Sinhjee. Dinner was served on board the troopship as we steamed out of Ballard Pier. Orders were that uniform or mess kit will be worn during dinner. For breakfast and lunch also uniform had to be worn. For tea, sports blazers and white trousers were permitted. Col. Mac-Gregor was exceedingly nice through out the trip.

Mukerjee and I made friends with all King's Commissioned Officers and V.O.C's and men. There were many territorial officers from Bengal, Madras and the South. They were all exceedingly good and friendly types. Gulsher, Akbar, Mahmud Jan, Shahbaz, Sher Dil, Bhola Nath, Rajendra Sinh Jee, Man Singh, Burki, Mukerjee and I were generally on one table and always together.

For the first few days sea was a little rough and many of our friends confined themselves to their cabins. As weather improved after Aden, deck games were introduced. Some damn fellow got a mad idea of Deck Hockey. From Aden four dozen ordinary walking sticks were purchased. This game was a real murder. It was an all-in Hockey. The only thing you were not permitted to do was to hit an opponent on the head with your stick. Every thing else was permitted. Within a few days, ship's medical inspection room was full of officers, V.C.O's and men with wounds all over the body. Still it was the most thrilling game on board. Several teams were organised. Some of the most ferocious troops like Pathan, Sikh, Jat and Gurkhas were most amusing to watch when playing deck hockey. If some one fell; within a second there would be a dozen men, on top of him to retrieve the ball. This ferocious game was so popular with our troops and officers that Col. Mac-Gregor offered a silver cup and medals for the championship. This cup and medals were procured from the troops entertainment fund. It is very interesting to say that with nearly seven hundred officers and men on board the troopship; a team consisting of myself, Mukerjee, Shahbaz, Major Rajendra Sinhjee and Major Wilson the contingent's Adjutant, won the trophy for deck hockey both going out to England and on the

return trip. My legs had several wounds which lasted for days. But it was good fun. Troops used to love this game and there was always tremendous applause during a good game.

Nearly twelve days in the Indian Ocean and red sea had made us sex starved. After leaving Poona, we had not even seen a nice popsy. H.T. Neuralia was scheduled to berth at Port Said harbour just at sunset. Orders were issued by Colonel Mac Gregor O.C. Contingent, that troops will not be permitted to go ashore. Officers will be given only five hours for some recreation etc. Clean warm uniform was worn. We were all very tired in pacing the troopship for so many days. When we stepped ashore; Terra Firma felt very nice indeed. Captain Man Singh, Mukerjee, I and a few other army officers made up a party. We walked along the promanade and then turned right along one of the main streets. It was a cool evening and there was a very nice breeze. It was such a nice change from the hot Indian ocean and Red Sea. Lights had been switched on. The main street looked fairly well illuminated. We pased a few cafes and restaurants but the atmosphere did not look good. Round the corner we came to a night club "La Cigale". It appeared to be a fairly nice place. It was still early in the evening and there were not many people watching the cabaret show. Lights were very dim. There were quite a number of merry makers and there appeared to be no shortage of popsies and wine.

We made our way to a corner where there were two tables with sufficient number of chairs. We had hardly walked a few paces when four or five good looking popsies appeared from behind a screen. Without losing much time one of the Popsies got very friendly with one of our friends. This amused me and I laughed. In a fraction of a second I foud two pretty arms round my neck, and a French Egyptian type of Popsy almost hanging round my neck. Our shining wings pinned to the chest of the tunic must have attracted these dames. They must be having a very good opinion about the intrepid aviators. Tbe two prettiest ones were with us. The rest entertained our army friends. Cabaret show was really magnificient. These young dames could only speak half broken English. music was really nice. In the end

the dames liked us so much that they all exclaimed "We is the come to the sheep". But we politely refused "No sister-not the ship! It is a trooper There is military discipline on board, and Mc Gregor does not believe in Popsies floating around with young intrepid aviators and foot slogging soldiers, especially after having left the shores of Bombay". Mac Gregor himself was a cavaliero but he always believed that riding horses was a little different to trotting around with Popsies. I expect this was one of the mottos of Poona Horse which was commanded by Colonel Mac Gregor.

When the ship was leaving Port Said; I never saw so much obscene literature and dirty postcards floating around. We knew that import of dirty postcards and obscene literature was strictly prohibited in English Ports. Before berthing at Southampton all picture postcards and dirty literature was destroyed and thrown into the sea. For days, after the midday meal and during rest time in the cabins, screams of laughter could be heard for miles as dirty post cards were compared. It became a regular competition. About ten or fifteen of us got together and competed for the best post card. In the end Captain Gulsher Noon of the Indian Cavalry, who was one of the senior most officers in the contingent was brought into the cabin to act as a judge. Gulsher himself would laugh so much that he politely would say "Gentlemen your collection is magnificient. Your art collection is such a record that I am unable to judge which is the prize winner" Gradually the story went round the ship that the Indian Coronation Contingent had made such a record breaking art collection at Port said that the Customs authorities would faint at Southampton. Second in command of the contingent and Major Wilson the Adjutent conveyed a message to all Indian Officers through the two seniors; Major Rajender Sinhjee and Captain Gulsher Noon; that Bay of Biscay was a good place to get rid of the dirty post cards from Port Said. Consequently all obscene literature and dirty post cards were destroyed and thrown into the bay of Biscay through the port holes; After having produced incessant laughter and mirth throughout our voyage in the Mediterranean.

A dress rehearsal was organised on board when the ship had turned round at Gibralter and was steering

a Northerly course towards the British Isles: Climate was cooler and warm uniform was most comfortable. This was the first time that ceremonial uniform was worn. Air Marshal Sir Edgar Ludlow Hewitt A.O.C.-in-C India had approved a new ceremonial uniform for the I.A.F. It consisted of a Khaki tunic with Biscuit colour Jodhpurs, and Jodhpur boots. A small cap of the pattern of Royal Flying Corps of 1914-1918 was worn. Army ceremonial uniform was terrific. Multicoloured tunics breeches and long black leather boots, and swords were carried. Mukerjee and I had black suede Jodhpur boots. For a ceremonial in Delhi, black suede Jodhpur boots would probably look very smart, but in the torrential rainfall of London, Suede boots would be no good. Every one liked our uniform which was made by Phelps Delhi. Our Jodhpur boots earned us the name "These Pansies from the Air Force". These boots gave us sterling service. We marched fourteen miles during the Coronation of King George the VI. Only towards the tail and of the March, rain came and our boots were wet. We wore warm socks. Suede leather kept the moisture away.

Before leaving Peshawar, I had written to Squadron Leader Bouchier who was commanding a fighter squadron in England, that Mukerjee and I would like to see him during our stay at Hampton Court. Similarly I had written to Squadron Leader Silvester also. When at Hampton Court I received a telephone call from Squadron Leader Silvester. He was at Andover. He promised that he would come to Hampton Court and have dinner with me. But nothing was heard from Squadron Leader Bouchie,

By the end of April, H. T. Neuralia arrived in Southamton Water. A motor boat with senior army officers came to say welcome. This was probably in accordance with orders from the War office. The ship berthed at Southampton and we left by special train for Hampton Court. Lunch was given to us in the form of Sandwitches and coffee in the big steel hanger at Southampton. The train left just after lunch. We reached Hampton Court railway station by tea time. A. D. C. to Duke of Glucestor had turned up at the Hampton Court railway station to welcome the Contingent. We

marched up to Hampton Court grounds with an army band. Thousands of holiday makers had lined the road between the railway station and Hampton Court. There was terrific cheeering given to the contingent. Ceremonial dress was not worn. We were tired and went straight into our tents. After a wash we came to the Officers Mess. Real good English tea (I mean Indian tea prepared in England) was given with cakes and plenty of bread and butter. Officers Mess was being run on contract. It provided very good meals and tea.

I have some very happy recollections of the Indian Coronation Contingent and Hampton Court. English nation is mad on pomp and glory. They love their kings and queens. During the coronation, immense hospitality was shown to the members of Dominion countries or what is known as the Commonwealth these days. Thousands of Englishmen and women and children used to come to our camp every day and watch troops and Indian officers practice for the coronation march. Outside in the streets, tremendous hospitality was shown. Men and women passing by offered us cigarettes, chocolates and sweets. We were a part of the British commonwealth, an empire on which the sun never sets. We were their friends who had come from seven thousand miles away to show our rejoicing and happiness and share their joy during the Coronation of King George the VI, Emperor of India. Everyone was so good to us. I remember; during the actual day of coronation, as we marched through the streets of London and at the end of the ceremoney when the Indian contingent was halted in a by street before getting into coaches for Hampton Court; an old woman was so much overwhelmed by her feelings that she came out of the crowd, put her arms round me and kissed me on the face saying "God bless you-my son!"

From Hampton court, we used to go to London in the evening for pictures or tea etc. London Casino gave a gala night performance but both Mukerjee and I were not fortunate enough to get an invitation. Pictures brought by some of the boys were terrific. Some of the best looking Popsies of the English stage were on the show. Some of the advertisement pictures released by the Management of London Casino showed a Popsy

in a silk Swin suite. That dame had a figure! Her bosom looked like that of a mermaid painted by an oriental artist.

Having missed or rather being left out of the invitation show at London Casino on about 4th May 1937; we made up a party with a view to seeing a smaller stage and variety show. Many of the Territorial army officers had not seen the English stage. So that day, Sher Dil, Mahmud Jan, Shahbaz and I brought tickets for the variety show running in a theatre situated just opposite the Tivoli in strand. I gave them a colossal lecture as they had never been to England before. "English law is exceedingly strict. No woman is permitted to come on the stage showing her bosom etc. Englishman is a peculiar person. He does not like these sexual demonstrations in public. On the continent and especially in France it is an act of art to see a woman with a beautiful bosom". I told them.

As we entered the theatre, the show had already started. On the stage among beautiful paintings of an old mountainside of the Roman Empire; white slave girls sat near the opening of a cave. Althought caves and the mountainside was depicted on the screen by natural paintings; the slave girls were real. About half a dozen sat in a pensive mood alround and on top of the cave waiting for the Roman King who had arrived with a whip in his hand. These dames did not even have a leaf around a certain portion of the anatomy. They possessed the most beautiful and well shaped breasts a woman can ever have. Captian Sher Dil nudged me "You said the English law does not permit dames trotting around on the stage with nothing on. What is this?" To which I replied in a whisper as we were shown to our seats "After all these are only supposed to be slave girls, They are like statues, and they are not permitted to shake their bosom or trot around on the stage".

Many friends used to turn up at Hampton Court. One day an official tea party was given by the Contingent. Sir Feroze Khan Noon, our High Commissioner in London was the guest of honour. Many ex. Indian army Generals, Air Marshals and Admirals were invited.

We could easily recognise Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood, Ex. Commander-in-Chief of Indian forces. Ex. Divisional Commander of Peshawar was also there. Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Indian Navy Admiral Fitz Herbert was also there. Then Sir John Steele turned up in a top hat and ceremonial tail coat. Mukerjee nudged me "There is our friend-many a night have I lain awake thinking of you". Both of us walked upto Sir John Steele. very smart salute was given by both of us Sir John was exceedingiy happy to see us. He was very nice and talked to us for a long time about the progress made by the I. A. F.

Next day Squadron Leader Fair-weather our Ex. C. O. of 20 Squadron and his Mrs, and Children turned up. We had lunch and tea togather. He was a charming person. What a pity that he was killed in operations over Norway or Germany in the last World War II. Lieutenant Sen's mother, sisters and brothers came to the camp. They used to live in London. They were very fond of seeing some officers and men from 5/10th Baluch which was Sen's infantry unit at Landi Kotal. I took them to officers Mess and we had some tea together. They lnvited me to their house for dinner. They were exceedingly nice. It was in Mrs. Sen's house that I saw a photograph of late Lieutenant Sen of the Royal Flying Corps. He was killed in action in first world war 1914-1918. Sen, Roy, Hardit Singh Malik and Valenkar were the first Indian Officers who flew with the Rayal Flying Corps.

Major and Mrs. Rudra, our great friends from the 15th Punjab Regiment Peshawar Cantonment were also in London during the Coronation. They used to come to the camp quite often. One day they brought with them an American girl whom I nick named Fuzzy Wuzzy as she used to have an uncontrolled growth of hair. Fuzzy was a great girl. She had been out to India as a tourist during the winter of 1935-36. She had been alround to Qutab Minar, Golden Temple, Badshahi Mosque and Shahdara Lahore. She knew the local shopping centres in Dabbi Bazar and Anarkali. Fuzzy was really a funny thing. She was mad on collecting souvenirs. She asked for a miniature I. A. F., Wing in gold which we wore on the mess kit. Then

she took a fancy to I. A. F. gold buttons on our ceremonial tunics. She wanted one gold button as a souvenir. We dodged the issue that evening as next day was the first ceremonial rehearsal parade in Hampton Court gardens. "Thank God-we dodged Fuzzy" said I to Mukerjee. "I have no spare buttons. Phelps gave us complete tunics and mess kit, but no spare buttons. We'll be sunk if we start giving sonvenirs to world Tourists". We thought Fuzzy would understand but by God! next morning just as we formed up and were called to attention by the Colonel Commandant of the Contingent; Fuzzy strolled into the spacious lawns of Hampton Court. She must have taken a taxi all the way from the heart of London. I was in the rear rank and had not noticed Fuzzy arriving from a long distance. We were all standing to 'attention' and could not look arround. Army officers were given the command 'Draw swords'. Mukerjee and I used to be very fidgety during 'Draw swords' and 'Return swords', particularly during the latter movement as many officers came from the Territorial army and were a bit ropy about their sword drill. No doubt that the regulars were perfect. And there were a few honorary dear old types likes Lieutenant Colonel Suhrawardy who was a doctor and a Military Physician to the Governor of Bengal. The dear old man could only wield a surgeon's knife. A blooming great sword was too much for him. and then he had to keep in unison with the timing of the sword drill as carried out by regular officers of the Indian army, who literally knocked sparks out of the atmospheric ether when swords were returned to the scabbard like lightening.

One day Mukerjee had the misfortune of standing next to Lieutenant Colonel Suhrawardy during a rehearsal parade. After swords had been drawn, during which period the Air Force types stood still as we carried no swords, and after a practice salute had been carried out; the Colonel Commandant, roared out "Return-swords". There was one single 'Swish' through the air as Suhrawardy's sword hit Mukerjee on the side of the right thigh and tore a piece off his ceremonial Jodhpurs. Luckily it did not penetrate the flesh. After that incident we decided to avoid standing to the left of a

Territorial Army officer. If by any misfortune, due to sizing etc. we came next to a Territorial type then we always took a smart step to the rear when the word of command 'Return sword' was given. The sword invariably went off the mark. But Mukerjee or my Jodhpur was not there to be ripped open. Gradually the timing and judgment improved and the Territorials wer perfect a few days before 12th of May the coronation day.

On this particular day of Fuzzi's visit to Hampton Court garden; Mukerjee was being worried terribly by a Territorial man on his right. Sword drill was repeated several times and each time Mukerjee smartly stepped back to avoid a gash in his Jodhpurs. I was in the rear rank and was fortunate to have a Regular type on my right who was literally knocking sparks out of the air with the movement of his sword. I was safe and stood still. watching all the fun, especailly Mukerjee right in front of me; stepping forwards, and backwards as hundres of swords flashed through the air. Poor man was wiping cold sweat off his forehead everyday the order 'Stand easy' was received. In one of the acrobatic movements of stepping back; Mukerjee quietly whispered and then repeatedly for my atention in the rear rank "Wo-AO-AO-AO" „Do you see what I see?--Fuzzy is on the horizon". I turned my eyes slightly to the left without turning my head as we were still at 'attention'. Sure as anything; Fuzzy was traversing the ground in front of the palace at a fast speed. Terrific laughter almost escaped from my mouth as I excercised tremendous self restraint in suppressing it. Mrs. Rudra had such a laugh when I told her the story of Mukerjee facing two calamities on the parade ground at the same time ; a Territorial sword on the right and Fuzzy appearing on the left. We had some coffee together in the mess after parade. Mrs. Rudra, Jick and Fuzzy joined us.

Coronation March was a tremendous spectacle. Out of seven hundred Indian officers and men, only five hundred took part in the March. The main procession waited on the Pall Mall till Coronation ceremony was completed in the Cathedral, Procession started as the King and Queen arrived in the Horse drawn carriage.

Indian contingent was really good. It consisted of officers and troops from each and every unit fof the Indian Defence Services. I only caught a glimpse of Canadian mounties round the bend. They were exceedingly smart but certainly not better then our King's mounted escort consisting of Major Rajendra Sinhjee, Captain Gulsher Noon, Col. Mac Gregor and other cavalry officers. We marched fourteen miles but never felt tired. Fantastic number of people crowded the streets. Every Building and every hundred yards of the pavement appeared to contain millions of men and women ingayclothes. Cheering was colossal.

A mounted guards officer to the right of Mukerjee found it so difficult to control his horse in thundering cheers. Several times I thought "Mukerjee had his chips" as the horse reared and came on top of him. We could not look to the sides even once. during the ceremmal through the streets of London. Only once, a "Stand at ease" and 'Stand Easy' was given in the Strand. You could not count the people. One wondered at the strength of those eight or ten storeyed buildings in the Strand and throughout the route of the Coronation March. How much weight of people these buildings could take?

Coronation march along with our beloved King and Queen was a great success. Only towards the end, a little rain came, but by then the King and Queen had entered the gates of Buckingham Palace and, we were near to our buses and coaches.

Two days later the contingent marched into Buckingham Palace at the special invitation of King George VI along with all other contingents of the British Dominions; Australia, Canada, South Africa etc. It was a long procession headed by the band of Cold Stream Guards. In reverse alphabetical order, Indian contingent was first followed by Canada, Burma, and Australia etc. This order was reversed in the grounds of the Palace where Australia was Number 1 followed by Burma and Canada and then India, and South Africa etc.

The Royal family appeared on the balcony of the Palace. Widow of King George V, Queen Mary was also there along with Princess Elizabeth and Margaret Rose

who looked very small. King George VI and Queen came down the steps of Buckingham Palace followed by Queen Mary and the Princesses. Then came Dukes of Kent and Gloucester. We were lined up in rows. The rows were divided up by the Royal family. The Queen pinned Coronation Medals to the chest of all those officers and men who were in the second row. I was exceedingly lucky to have received the medal from the Queen who graciously talked to only two officers of the Indian Contingent. I was lucky to be one. As she gave me the medal she asked me "Are you the Flying Corps". "Yes, Your Majesty" was my answer.

We left for India on 20th May from Southampton where H.T. Neuralia was berthed. The Mayor of Southampton received the Indian contingent at the Town Hall. We marched up to the town hall with a local army band. The town had been given a holiday to see and meet the Indian Coronation Contingent. On both sides of the streets, millions of people were lined up. There was tremendous cheering. A kind hearted woman passed a small gift packet in my hand while marching to attention. I almost knocked it down with the swing of the hand while marching to attention. I realized my stupidity and ran baek to pick it up. The woman could not be recognised who gave the present. However when I boarded the ship, her card was there with some cigarettes and chocolates. I sent here a letter of thanks from Peshawar along with a small embroidered table cloth as a souvenir from Peshawar. She acknowledged by air mail.

The Mayor of Southampton read out an address of Welcome and goodbye at the same time, because we were leaving within an hour. Colonel Mac Gregor or Savoury replied to the address of Welcome. There were thundering cheers by a terrific crowd assembled in front of the Town Hall. Our Commander shook hands with the Mayor and thanked the people of Southampton on behalf of the entire contingent. The band struck a marching tune and we wound our way to the Dockyard and were soon on board.

Coronation left a wonderful memory of Good will and kindness in our hearts. The people of England were magnificient during this happy occasion. It gave us a conviction that we were a brother nation of the same Empire.

During the present days, India and Pakistan would do exceedingly well to send large contingents to U.K. during coronation or other happy occasions. Tremendous benefits are achieved by a spirit of brotherhood. So iong as Cranwell, Sandhurst, Woolwich, Oxford, Cambridge and other educational institutions are there, our feelings towards England will be like that of a younger brother towards an elder brother.

H.T. Neuralia left Southampton that afternoon. Bay of Biscay was rough as usual. At Gibralter, our contingent marched upto the main parade ground where General Officer Commanding British forces in Gibralter took the salute. After the parade, Sir Charles Harrington British Governor of Gibralter asked us to tea and light refreshments at the Governments House. Sir Charles and Lady Harrington had arranged an exceedingly good party in the spacious and beautiful Government House. After saying good bye to Sir Charles and Lady Harrington, we walked down the main street and did a little souvenir shopping. There were a few very good shops belonging to Indian traders. In a Sindhi shop we bought a few things. I missed Mukerjee a lot and the typical Air force humour. Army humour is some times a little crude and difficult to appreciate. Mukerjee remained behind in London.

It was about 6 P.M. Cabartes in Spain start a little early. The same afternoon we had been upto the border also which separated British territory of Gib from Franco's spain. Captain Man Singh and I set our foot inside the Spanish territory. Guard Commander did not object. They were very polite. The sentry presented arms at the orders of the guard Commander. We both acknowledged the slaute. It was nice to be with Franco's men.

In a leading restaurant we ordered some more tea. By now the Cabaret produced a star turn and a young Spanish Popsy gave a demonstration of Spanish country dancing with castanets which made hot rhythm music so captivating. Six of us sat at a table. This beautiful popsy walked straight upto our table from the stage. She sat down with us and within a second four more Popsies joined us. More tea and drinks were served. It was a good show that H.T. Neuralia was

scheduled to leave by dusk otherwise we would all have been doing the Spanish dancing till midnight.

Lights of Giralter and the famous rock disappeared gradually. We were tired and slept well. Next day we got the news that deck hockey was to commence from that evening. Nearly eighteen teams of six aside had been entered. My legs were still sore from the games that we played on our outward journey. Every regiment produced a team; Baluch, Jat, Sikh, Hyderabad, Frontier Force, Punjab, Sappers and Minors, Indian Artillery, Cavalry, Gurkhas, and the Special ship's team which consisted of Major Rajendra Sinhjee, Captain Gulsher Noon, Shahbaz, Maior Wilson, Myself and one officer from the ship. Finals were not decided til we almost reached Bombay; but By God we were wounded like soldiers on a battle field. As usual the ship's special team won. Finals were played against the Gurkhas. Special oak walking sticks procured in London for this very purpose were used. A village fight in the Punjab does not produce so much fun as Deck Hockey did for the seven hundred officers and men of the Indian Coronation contingent 1937, who howled with mirth and laughter.

At Bombay Monsoons broke just as we landed on the 15th of June 1937. Four of us hired a taxi to have a cup of tea at the Taj Mahal hotel. On the way to the Bombay terminus railway station we saw the billowing black clouds and a hurricane which reached us before the taxi driver could put his hood up. Torrential rainfall was encountered. We were glad to get into the train (Frontier Mail) which pulled out of station at the right time.

Next day the heat was terrific. This was a typical sultry weather which precedes Monsoons. After a long journey we reached Delhi. Many friends of the Indian contingent had already said goodbye. Gulsher Noon got down at Delhi. Akbar got down at Ambala. Sher Dil got down at Lahore. Eventually Captain Mahmud Jan and I were the sole occupants of 1st class carriage. This was the journey's and after a most pleasant trip to England and after having taken part in King George the VI's coronation.

When I reached the officer's mess of R.A.F. Peshawar, it was completely deserted. I asked the Khidmatgar "Where is everyone?" "Sir-operations have started on a very big scale in Waziristan." Was the reply from the mess Khidmatgar. "Fakir of Ipi has been exceedingly tough. The entire tribe of Torikhel Wazirs are up in arms. There are lakhs of Torikhels. Question of Islam Bibi has been very badly tackled by the British. There is a big flare up and almost hand to hand fighting between the Bannu and Razmak brigades on one side and Tori Khels on the other. Almost Every tribe living in Waziristan, including all sections of Wazirs and Mahsuds are being drawn into the fight. Four squadrons including two Hart Squadrons from Risalpur, No. 5 A.C. Squadron from Chaklala and the whole of No. 20 A.C. Squadron are at fort Miranshah for the last two months". "Hells-Bells" was my reply "So-the war is on".

DUST STORM OVER WAZIRISTAN

MARCH 1937.

This is a chapter by itself. A good chapter in the History of Indian Air Force before partition and the present day Royal Pakistan Air Force; because it was in the operations on the North West Frontier that the Indian Air Force, a show piece upto the year 1937, proved its real value. These operations gave an impetus to the expansion of the Indian Air Force, and made us into tough aviators from a batch of College Pansies.

Early in February 1937 a young Pathan tribesman kidnapped a young pretty Hindu lassie from a village in Bannu District. He fled straight to the hills of Waziristan. The matter was immediately reported to the Deputy Commissioner Bannu who handed over the entire case to the Political Agent in Waziristan. Resident Waziristan and Brigade Commander Bannu were all senior British officers. Tremendous amount of pressure was brought on the Torikhel and Madda Khel wazirs in order to force the young Pathan fellow to give up the Hindu lassie. The young eloper was

quite crafty. He thought that singly he could not fight the hand of law, eventhough he was in independent tribal territory. British Political forces, were tremendous. Therefore the best thing was to bring the force of religion into the whole episode and enlist full help from all sections of tribes living in Waziristan. The man took the Hindu lass to a Muslim priest or Mullah and by force or goodwill converted her into a Muslim. A party of the village elders or maliks was present. The girl embraced Islam. Recitations from the holy Qoran were read by the priest. In accordance with tribal rites a volley of rifle shots was fired into the air as a sign of jubilation. Several sheep were slaughtered and roasted. There was a beating of drums and many took part in the tribal dancing with force and vigour. It was a day of rejoicing. A love marriage had been solemnized with the conversion of a Hindu girl. She was given a Muslim name of Islam Bibi.

The feast, beating of drums, and vigorous village dancing passed off very well that evening, in a remote village situated in the independent territory of Waziristan. Next morning came the shock when the Pathan village found just after morning prayers that two Company's of Tochi Scouts under British officers had surrounded the village and a flight of Audaxes fully bombed up had arrived from Peshawar and were circling round the village. A Pathan is always very calm and collected and does not jump into warfare instantaneously.

A meeting or jirga of the village elders was called up. The Resident drove down from Razmak. Political agent arrived from Miranshah. Deputy Commissioner Bannu also arrived on the spot. Father and mother of the girl were produced. After tremendous deliberations it was decided that the girl must remain in the custody of her mother in Bannu. A full scale Jirga of all tribes would be held. In accordance with Islamic law the girl would decide in front of the Jirga and a fully representative house of British officers whether she was happy in embracing Islam and remaining with her Pathan boy friend as a happily wedded wife or whether she would like to remain a Hindu and be in eternal bliss with her father and mother. Force was of no use. The poor girl was never

given a chance to have a say in the matter. After kidnapping she bad been whistled off to the wild hills of Waziristan.

The decision was a very controversial point. A jirga of the village grey beards said that Islam Bibi embraced Islam in front of them and a Muslim priest. During the wedding ceremony, in accordance with Muslim rites she had said 'Yes' to two witnesses who provided religious evidence to the marriage ceremony. According to the Deputy Commissioner Bannu, Islam Bibi clung to her mother and sobbed that she had been converted at the point of the dagger.

Political Resident in Waziristan gave an assurance to the tribes that the case would come up before a fully representative jirga of all tribes and British authorities. In the meantime Islam Bibi was to remain with her Hindu mother in the town of Bannu. Weeks went by. The Pathan boy pressed his elders to call up the Jirga soon. British Political authorities delayed the Jirga for tempers to calm down. In the meantime the bird had flown. Deputy Commissioner Bannu had arranged for Islam Bibi and her parents to leave Bannu under a heavy military escort and migrate to Lahore and the interior of the Punjab, away from the drums and daggers of wild Waziristan.

News leaked through to the tribal belt that Islam Bibi was helped by the British to migrate into the interior of the Punjab where no tribesman could possibly venture. It was an insult to religion that a girl who had embraced Islam in the presence of tribal grey beards should have been torn away from her beloved husband. This was the popular feeling throughout the length and breadth of Waziristan.

Islam Bibi disappeared with the full concurrance of the Governor of N.W.F, Province, George Cunningham who weighed up the legal and just side of the case.

Deputy Commissioner Bannu maintained that in the presence of Political Agent, Resident Waziristan, Political Agent Miranshah, Brigade Commander Bannu, a Muslim priest from the town, and the parents of the girl; Islam Bibi made a definite statement that she was not prepared to go back to him but would

remain with her parents and would stick to her faith, Hinduism. Thereupon, with the order of Government N.W.F.P, Islam Bibi and her parents said goodbye for ever to their beloved home in Bannu District where their ancestors had lived since the days of Gautam Budha.

On the other side the tribes were furious. Islam was in danger. Infidels were interfering too much with their religion. The British were wicked. Woe to the British! Heretics must be taught a lesson. Settled district of Bannu must be destroyed in order to keep up the prestige of Islam. Islam Bibi must be brought back and given back to her Muslim lover even if it meant annihilation of Bannu Brigade and martyrdom of a few thousands of Wazirs.

Down in the Shaktu and Khaisora valleys of rivers, bon fires were lit on top of snow. covered mountains where pine trees rustled and swayed. A few thousand Torikhels and Maddakhel wazirs sat round the fires while sheep were roasted. After dinner, Moazzin called the faithfull to prayers. His call pierced through the peaks of those rugged mountains which had stood as sentinels of liberty and freedom for these primitive pathan tribes through the ages. Rows upon rows of tribesmen fully armed to the teeth stood up for prayers. Divine help was asked for, by the leader of the prayers. "The struggle would be very hard and bitter as the British are fully armed with tanks, machine guns, and aeroplanes" said one their grey bearded maliks. "But we are fighting for Islam and the prestige of our religion."

Several heart rending speeches were made by grey bearded maliks or elders and chiefs. The young ones, by the thousands, listened patiently. "Struggle will be very hard and bitter. Keep your ranks well closed in. If one falls; his place must immediatly be taken by the one behind him. Success will not be achieved in a month's fighting. It will take us a few months but success will surely be ours. Look back at the glory of our fathers. In 1919-1921! How we surrounded a fully equipped British Brigade near Thal (Kurram) and destroyed almost half of it. Weapons have improved. British Brigades possess more modern weapons. Their machine guns fire faster with longer range and bigger bullets. Their aeroplanes carry

a more deadly cargo now than what they carried in 1919-1921. Indian Sepoy is getting tougher and has copied our tactics of mountain warfare and infiltration. But God is on our side. The faithful shall be successful. This is our belief. We shall fight on Qoranic Principles. Woe to the British; the infidels who interfere with our religion and freedom of tribal territory and our laws".

Before the time, burning fires died out in the pale blue light of the waning moon, two large lashkars (tribal hordes) approximately ten thousand strong were deploying towards the low lands of Bannu District. Bannu Brigade met them at the bottom of the foot hills. There was a fight. There were heavy casualties on both sides. By night fall Political authorities interfered. A message of peace was sent to the Torikhel Lashkar requesting that a Jirga be held in Bannu fort under the chairmanship of the Resident Waziristan. Sir George Cunningham Governor of N.W.F. Province was to address this fully representative Jirga of Torikhel Wazirs.

After the first days clash, both sides licked their wounds. Tribal dead were taken back to the vailleys of Khaisora and Shaktu rivers across the snow covered mountains of the North West, where graveyards of their elders killed in previous wars, existed. Bannu Brigade brought their dead and wounded to the Indian Military Hospital Bannu Cantonment. A few bodies were cremated and others buried in accordance with the particular religious rites.

In March 1937, a grand scale Jirga, in which Sir George Cunningham addressed a very large gathering of the tribal maliks, did not bear much fruit. The Maliks went away grumbling bitterly. Sir George and the Resident Waziristan harped on justice and upholding of law and order. The tribal maliks stuck to the prestige of Islam and non-interference in the affairs of the tribesmen. The actual fact of the case was that the kidnapped Hindu girl Islam Bibi was a citizen of a settled district of British India. She was subject to Indian law and not primitive tribal customs.

However along with Islam Bibi's case, a hundred and one other minor complaints and acts of injustice

were put forward by the Jirga. Tempers ran high on both sides. There was an abrupt cessation of talks and the tribal maliks began leaving the conference. Shape of things to come was quite evident on that very day.

Acts of lawlessness commenced almost abruptly. The tribesmen cut off roads, destroyed telephone lines, uplifted cattle, ambushed convoys, and sniped military garrisons and outposts. At night time there was continuous sniping into Bannu Cantonment area and Mir Ali Camp. There was simultaneous lawlessness throughout Waziristan. A postal lorry from Bannu to D.I.K. was looted and burnt. All road traffic between Bannu and D.I.K. Razmak, Tank, Thal and Miranshah came to a virtual standstill. Tremendous panic prevailed in the settled districts. Fakir of Ipi, spiritual leader of tribes living in Waziristan, repeatedly called upon all sections of tribes to unite and declare Jehad against the British.

Intelligence department collected news of what was said at Arsol Kot, Fakir of Ipi's home, after Friday prayers. Firings and killings continued in the meantime. Many valuable lives were lost in the British outposts protecting military roads between Bannu and Razmak, and also Tank and Razmak. Almost the whole of the tribal belt from the left of Afridi hills upto Fort Sandeman was up in arms and waiting for a chance to have a major clash. Smaller incidents of shooting up lorries and outposts were merely a provocation for a major clash. Once a major clash takes place between a British brigade and a tribal lashkar, then a nonstop shooting match is fixed over a period of a few years.

Patience of the Political authorities, and Governor N.W.F.P. was exhausted. At Delhi, the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief were kept informed of the situation. Secretary of State for India was also fully in the picture. Tribe-men's temper would not come down. Tori Khel and Madda Khel Wazirs alone numbered a few hundred thousand. Each man was armed to the teeth. Heavy calibre rifles of all types of continental manufacture trickled into the tribal territory through Central Asia and the North West. Mauser and Belgian manufacture were a favourite. Their own primitive manufacture was

also very good. Each man carried a few hundred rounds of ammunition.

During one Friday prayers, Fakir of Ipi declared a religious war against the British. This was promptly picked up by a few intelligence agents who carried the tale to Political agent at Miranshah. Bannu and Razmak brigades were alerted. Frontier Corps of irregulars consisting of Tochi Scouts, Kurram Militia and South Waziristan Scouts etc. were alerted. Tribesmen were on the war path. Torikhel wazirs under the direct and inflamatory influence of the religious leader the Fakir of Ipi were in the fore front. Reconnaissance ground parties and armoured cars reported several thousands lurking near the foot hills of Saidgi. Two minor clashes took place between the tribesmen and Tochi Scouts and a company of the regular army from Bannu. Our casualities were ten sepoys and an officer killed. A strong force of regular troops supported by armoured cars was sent to engage tribal lashkar but tribesmen had withdrawn. Their tactics of hit and run were exceedingly good against superior weapons of the Indian army. So much panic was created that many Hindu families left Bannu. Incredible-that the story of Helen of Troy should have been repeated in this far off corner of the world. Islam Bibi had set the whole of the tribal territory on fire. Many valuable lives had already been lost and what was yet to come.

As an Indian poet had said :

ابتدائے عشق ہے روتا ہے کیا * آگے آگے دیکھئے ہوتا ہے کیا

"This is the beginning of tears in a love story-Watch, what comes next".

By now, many tribes from across the border had started drifting into Waziristan. All were armed to the teeth. Rifles were of foreign manufacture. 'Made in Belgiam' and 'made in Germany' was inscribed on almost every tribal rifle. But probably these were manufactured in some other country. Maker's name was probably an international political lie.

During next Friday prayers, many tribes from across the hills had assembled in the village mosque at Arsol Kot, Fakir of Ipi's home. A fiery sermon was delivered by the great Fakir "In the name of Allah I

call upon thee the followers of Islam and the holy Qoran, to take vengeance upon the British! These dogs have polluted our holy land- Woe to the British! Rise in arms! We shall teach these infidels how to pollute our holy land"

That Friday afternoon, one could not count the number of tribesmen outside the village of Arsol Kot. Aerial reconnassance was carried out and danger signal was flashed across by wireless to Miranshah, Peshawar and Bannu. The same evening, Mir Ali Camp and fort Miranshah were surrounded by tribesmen. Two bomber squadrons of the Royal Air Force were despatched by Group Captain Bottomley from Risalpur and Kohat. After tremendous bombing and ground straffing, the tribal lashkar lifted the siege of these two forts and moved down to Bannu again. For four days this lashkar, about five thousand strong played Hell with Bannu brigade. Against aerial bombing the tribesmen always took shelter behind huge rocks and deep ravines. Principle of dispersal and Camouflage is followed rigidly by tribesmen against aerial attacks.

Situation became so serious that the army was brought on a regular war footing with the concurrence of Governor of N.W.F.P. and in accordance with the orders of C-in-C India. Bannu and Razmak brigades were given orders to move out to the area of Khaisora and Shaktu rivers for a punitive action against the tribesmen and the Fakir of Ipi. Final warning was given to the Fakir Sahib that if he did not control his hordes who had already done considerable damage; air bombing would have to be resorted to, which would inflict considerable damage to their cattle and villages. Reply was received from the Fakir Sahib saying that he was fully prepared for any eventuality. A firm action had to be taken. Firing a few machine guns into empty villages merely produced laughter from the tribesmen and a more vicious mentality. Punitive action had to be firm otherwise it was merely ridiculed.

Directives and orders had been received from His Excellency the Governor of N.W.F.P. and Sir Edgar Ludlow Hewitt A.O.C-in-C India.

One fine morning, Philip sent for me and told me that O.C. 20 Squadron, Squadron Leader Chisman wanted

to see me. This was on the morning of 20th March 1937. I saluted smartly as I entered Squadron Leader Chisman's office. "I have an important job for you-Awan. You know that the balloon has gone up over Waziristan. Tribesmen will not listen to reason. Orders have been received from Group Headquarters that Arsol Kot has to be bombed after twenty four hour's notice has been given to the Fakir Sahib for a complete evacuation of that village. A few large bundles of red leaflets written in Pushtu have been printed. Here these are in a corner. Take off immediately. Look at this quarter inch aerial map. Drop these going up and down the Khaisora river and Shaktu river. Make sure that Arsol Kot and Gulzamir Kot receive lots of these red leaflets. These are the two targets. Cattle, women and children, old and young must be evacuated from these two villages immediately as two Wapiti bomber squadrons from Kohat have to commence bombing at crack of Dawn tomorrow. Do not come low as they are very hostile and thousands of bullets will be fired on you. Make a good job of it. Good luck to you". I saluted and walked out with two chaprasis bringing up huge parcels of printed red leaflets.

Philip had already asked Flight Sergeant Hickey to have Wapiti K1263 wheeled out on the grass apron. I put on white flying overalls and helmet and goggles. An AC2 carried my narachute to the alrcraft. Naik Ram Singh was already in the Cockpit twirling the hand starter magneto when Barkat Ali and Kartar Singh were busy on the starting handles. LAC Sowerby a British Armourer posted to our flight had already slipped into an overall and had placed bundles of red notices in the rear cockpit.

After testing the engine and both magnetos, I took off and put the nose in a climb straight towards Landukai Ghar and Zeru Peak of the hills. Soon I passed over Ford Lockhart perched up on top of a hill about 7,000 feet high. On the way to Fort Miran shah, Fort Lockhart always provides an incentive for low flying. I went over those red roofs of the cantonment and garrison area of Fort Lockhart. Soon I passed Thal and then Spinwam. After Spinwam hill called Bannu Castle was clearly visible over the horizon on the left. From Spinwam I had to alter course by compass by at least ten degrees in order to hit a point, where Khaisora river comes out of

the hills into the lowlands and plains. I saw Mir Ali camp miles to the right. A few armoured cars were moving on the road between Saidgi and Razmak. A gentle duststorm was rising in the valleys, I looked back at Lac Sowerby who was sitting comfortably on bundles of red leaflets strewn all over the rear cockpit. I put my thumb up and shouted "O.K. Sowerby-all set-we are approaching Khaisora valley". There was no radio intercommunication in aircraft of those days. You shouted to your air gunner and made the required gestures. It was incredible how well messages were understood and replied-. Sowerby stood up in the rear cockpit From his waist upwards he was out of the cockpit. Only a monkey chain was fastened to his harness. "All set-Sir, Thik Hai" was the answer from Sowerby as he put both thumbs up which was a typical R.A.F. Signal.

The sun was very bright but down below in the valleys of Khaisora and Shaktu rivers a mild dust storm raged. It was fairly bumpy but Sowerby stood firm. I took out 1" map from the leg pocket of my overall and checked the position of Arsol Kot home of Fakir of Ipi and also Gulzamir Kot, a neighbouring village. Sure as anything Arsol Kot stood on the left bank of Khaisora river. In the mild dust storm those two hundred mud houses with about a score of high mud watch towers looked ferocious. Today was a Saturday. Only yesterday after the midday Friday prayers, tribesmen could not be counted by an aerial reconnaissance plane.

I went up towards the high hills and then banked the aircraft steeply towards left and came down the river in a gentle dive. I checked my altitude at 3,000 ft. above Arsol Kot in order to keep out of the range of rifle fire from a few thousand wazirs. This was the first operational Indian sortie. Intelligence report confirmed next day that I was heavily fired upon because the entire Wazir Lashkar consisting of Torikhel and Madda Khels was hiding in the Khaisora valley awaiting advance news of Bannu and Razmak Brigades.

"Let go-Sowerby" I said and Sowerby got going like a machine. Strings of packets were opened and each time Sowerby chucked a handful of red notices both on the right hand side and left hand side of the aircraft. It was a continuous activity as I went up and down the

Khaisora and Shaktu valleys. Snows had melted in March and both rivers had sufficient quantity of water coming from the high peaks of Razmak and Razani. Up and down the river, my faithful Wapiti K1263 flew obediently. Down below angry tribesmen clenched their fists, grinded their teeth and fired at the aircraft. No tribal bullet has upto now, hit an aircraft at 3000 feet. It is only during low bombing dive attacks and tactical support with front Vickers gun and rear Lewis guns that aircraft have been shot down. The score was pretty high including my ex. Flight Commander Pattison who was shot down over Tank-Jandola road in a De-Havilland 9A in the year 1917.

It took us about forty minutes to complete dropping of red leaflets. When I returned back to Peshawar my aircraft looked like a Christmas tree with red leaflets hanging from all wires and bracing cables of the tail plane. The sight was magnificient over the Khaisora and Shaktu valleys as millions of leaflets floated through the air towards earth.

As a matter of curiosity I picked up one from the tail plane and read it. It was written in Pushto. I cannot reproduce the text as approximately seventeen years have passed as I am writing these few lines. But it was something like this:—

"O, you the residents of Khaisora and Shaktu valleys. You have been warned! For a long time you were asked to refrain from hostilities, but you have raised your head in revolt and bitter opposition of the British Government. Repeatedly we have requested you. Repeatedly you have attacked military garrisons and committed atrocities on the civil population of settled districts. You are hereby warned to take all your dear ones and your cattle, men women, children and material out of the villages of Arsol Kot and Gulzamir Kot. Twenty four hours notice is given hereby with these red leaflets. By dawn tomorrow both villages, of Arsol Kot and Gulzamir Kot shall be bombed from the air. By orders of the Governor General in Council".

Next day half an hour before dawn, two squadrons of Wapitis took off from Kohat and arrived over Arsol Kot and Gulzamir Kot at the promised time which I had intimated to the dwellers of these villages. Mixture of 250, 112 and 12 pounders were carried. The

entire valley resounded with the deep thud of high explosives. Both villages were ruined. When the bombing took place, there was no sign of human or animal life in these villages. Twenty four hours notice was enough to remove everything, to the surrounding hills. But a mud house and a tribal village was as dear to the inhabitants of Arsol Kot and Gulzamir Kot as London was to the Englishmen. The tribes watched their homes being destroyed by aerial bombing, from the hill tops. Temper was rising pretty high. Had these houses been made of cement concrete and iron, the entire lot would have been destroyed. A mud house is very soft. Splinters of high explosive bombs go through the mud walls and roofs with the greatest of ease making a hole, of exactly the same size as that of the splinter. Mud houses can therefore be easily patched up by the tribesmen within a few hours of aerial bombing. When the bombing was on it appeared as if Hell was let loose on earth. Burst after burst of high explosives tore the atmosphere. The valley and high mountains echoed and reechoed, as smoke and debris was thrown up into the air.

When waves of aircraft left, tribesmen looked at their lovely villages from the mountain top as the smoke drifted away. Beautiful Arsol Kot and Gulzamir Kot stood as if no damage had been done. These villages defied the stern action of aerial bombing. Fakir of Ipi pointed to the villages with his finger "Look Yonder, O the followers of holy Prophet! The hand of God has protected our villages. The unfaithful shall never be successful. Rise in retaliation. We shall drive the British out of Waziristan". Twenty days later when Bannu and Razmak Brigades advanced through the valleys of Shaktu and Khaisora. these two villages were still intact although completely deserted. Thousands of infuriated bees attacked the advanced guard as troops moved into Arsol Kot and Gulzamir Kot. Walls and roofs of mud houses had many holes, big and small. Apparently splinters of bombs went through like pea shots through butter.

Baluch troops had a novel idea of pulling down mud walls and roofs. A long rope was passed through a hole in the mud wall of a house, created by passage of a bomb splinter. A log of wood was tied at one end and

kept in position against the wall. Outside the house, a whole company of troops hea- ved at the rope. Down came the Wall and the roof also. Mud portions were levelled out and wood portions were set on fire. This was the end of Fakir of Ipi's home, a place from which religious warfare was organised against the British.

Three months later when I returned back from the Coronation and carried out Aerial reconnaissance and cooperation sortie with the troops in Khaisora valley, I could not find a trace of Arsol Kot and Gulzamir Kot. These had been completely wiped out and there was no trace of them.

After having carried out dropping of red leaflets over Khaisora and Shaktu valleys on 20th March 1937, I lost all interest in Tribal operations as these difficulties were a regular feature with the tribes. Group Captain Bottomley had selected me for the dropping of red leaflets as I was the only Muslim pilot available at Peshawar. There was a tremendous propaganda in Muslim world that the British rule was exceedingly cruel to the poor Muslim tribes of the N.W.F.P. I was a witness to the commencement of operations and fair play given to the tribes. They were entirely to blame. They wanted to apply tribal laws to the settled districts, where their atrocities had assumed a tremendous magnitude. What happened to Miss Ellis in Kohat and Islam Bibi in Bannu? Kidnappings were quite common. Cruelties against the residents of Bannu and D.I.K. districts cannot be described. In a playful mood they killed civilized citizens of settled districts. Mohd Baran a citizen of D.I.K. was shot on the main road outside Bannu without any provocation whatsoever. Mohd Akbar Baluch another citizen of D.I.K. was shot at Manzai without any provocation. His mother fainted and fell on top of her son's body when it was brought to D.I.K. Haji Sarfaraz of D.I.K. was tortured and imprisoned in a cave near Razmak for months, till a ransom of ten thousand rupees was paid. Many Hindu men and women of D.I.K. and Bannu districts were kidnapped and tortured. Shooting up of military convoys and garrisons was a daily affair of the tribesmen. This they considered as a little recreation or like an organised game of hockey which had to be played in order to break up the monotony of wild mountains.

How long could these things be tolerated? This was only the British who could tolerate such nonsense. The tribes have only tried this trick once with Pakistan near Quetta in 1950, and they will remember for a long time how nonsense can be stopped.

By the end of March both I and Mukerjee were busy in getting our uniforms and mess kit ready for the Coronation. We were not bothered by the Frontier Operations. It was hoped that the Fakir of Ipi will see light and stop all nonsense. We left for Poona by train, within a few days from the dropping of the red leaflets. Aspee was ill with appendix trouble. In order to keep 'A' flight going, F/O's Majumdar, Narendra. and P/O Habibullah Khan were sent to Peshawar to fill the gap. Wilkie, Ravi Singh, Ranganadan and Mehar Singh kept 'B' flight going at Drigh Road. Squadron Leader Hancock O.C.1 Squadron I.A.F. also remained at Drigh Road.

From 28th March to 20th June i.e. a period of three months, Mukerjee and I were completely in a new world of our own. Coronation and a million festivities kept us so happy. When Indian contingent left Southampton for Bombay, Mukerjee cabled Peshawar for one Month's leave. This was granted. He stayed behind in London. His sisters and brother-in-law were in England. So they made up a party. Mukerjee asked me to stay behind for a month. "I am not so rich, old boy" was the answer. "If I miss the boat H.T. Neuralia, I have no money to pay for my passage back to India from my pocket".

On 15th June we landed back home at Bombay. I travelled by Frontier Mail the same evening and reached Peshawar on the morning of 18th June. The mess presented a desolate picture. "Where is everyone" I asked the old mess Khidmatgar who came to greet me. "Sir-operations have started on a very large scale in Waziristan. Two infantry brigades are at grips with the tribesmen. No. 20 Squadron, 5 Squadron and two Hart Squadrons from Risalpur are at Miranshah for the operations" was the reply "Fighting is exceedingly bitter. A whole convoy of the Indian Army has been ambushed in Shahur Tangi near Jandola and wiped out".

I.A.F. were permitted to go on leave. Poor Aspee had been operated upon in the British Military Hospital

Peshawar. I was so happy to see him in he evening when I called at the B.M.H. Majumdar had disappeared on leave to Darjeeling. Narender had gone to Allahabad, and Philip as usual was trekking in the Indus valley with one mule carrying his tentage and the second mule carrying his food stuff. When Philip got tired of trekking he got on top of the mule that carried his food stuff.

I remained in the mess for about ten days. During this time Jimmy James and I did a trip to Miranshah in order to convey some documents and some tinned food for the officers mess. Jimmy James flew an audax and I flew a Wapiti. Miranshah was full of aircraft, from No. 20, No. 5, and Harts of Risalpur. As many as twenty sorties a day were being carried out in tactical support of Bannu and Razmak brigades.

Then Jimmy James went away on leave to Murree or Srinagar. This left only Flight Lieutenant Turner and myself in the mess. At Peshawar the mess was so lonely and deserted. There were no aircraft in hangers except four Wapitis of I.A.F. two Wapitis of Group Headquarters and one Audax of No. 20 squadron which was occasionally flown by F/LT Turner. I got so browned off that I put in for one month's leave which was approved by Turner who was acting as O.C. 20 Squadron.

I picked up my green Chevrolet two seater and was off to my home town D.I.K. through the Kohat Pass and Bannu. I always believed that nothing in the world could beat a morning swim in the river Indus at D.I.K. Road between Peshawar and D.I.K. was heavily patrolled by the Frontier Constabulary. Only after passing Pezu Pass, I breathed a sigh of relief.

At D.I.K. stories of the tribal war were on every one's lips. Sympathies were divided. A section of the fanatic crowd applauded the Fakir of Ipi who was declared as a hero of the Muslim world; who was fighting the might of Britain; single handed. The more literate types thought that the tribes were exceedingly naughty and Fakir of Ipi was an agent of Russia.

Ballad of "Shahur Tangi' had been composed in Pushtu by a tribal poet. Little children sang the ballad in the streets of D.I.K. Khonia Khel a tribal outlaw, belonging to the clan of Mahsuds was the leader of the

raid on the British convey in which almost half the convoy was wiped out.

Khonia Khel was a notorious tribal malik or Chief who had been declared an outlaw by the Government of India for various raids and dacoities carried out in the settled districts of India. He was a fearless man who was a terror around the hills of Sararogha his native village. In his own blood feuds amongst the tribes, he had slain one hundred Wazirs and then burried the sword high up on a hill. Amongst the tribes, this was considered to be a terrific record, which no tribal Malik of any clan had achieved during the last forty years.

As a disciple of the Fakir of Ipi, Khonia Khel had vowed that he will down a British Convoy and butcher everyone. This vow was taken as a vengeance after the aerial bombing of Arsol Kot and Gulzamir Kot.

Eearly in June 1937 a British Convoy consisting of two hundred heavy vehicles, ecorted by armoured cars was moving forward along the road from Jandola to a forward fort position in the hills. The convoy consisted of men and material. At Shahur Tangi the road passes through a narrow defile with steep hills on one side and narrow gorge on the other side. Tremendous amount can be said about the primitive reconnaissance and intelligence reports of tribesmen. Several days prior to the departure of this convoy, the tribesmen had definite news that the convoy would pass through Shahur Tangi. An ambush was laid. Approximately five hundred strong tribesmen took position on top of the hill overlooking Shahur Tangi. This hill is approximately one thousand feet high above the Tangi or gorge which itself was about a thousand feet from the nearest ground level An ambush is never stronger than five hundred for fear of air action. Larger number is always difficult and clumsy to manoeuvre and disperse under air action. These five hundred were the pick of Khonia Khel's marauders. A tribesmen taking cover behind stone boulders becomes a stone himself.

Six armoured cars preceded or moved at the head of the column of two hundred heavy trucks carrying men, material, food supplies, stores and ammunition for a mountain garrison. There was a distance of two hundred yards between the last armoured car and the convoy.

Machine gun turrets of armoured cars protected the flanks of the convoy. Tribes-men lay quiet without a breath or a whisper. If the ambush was spotted there would be air action immediately, as the armoured, cars were in touch on wireless with Jandola fort where Scout's wireless section was in touch on W/T with Miranshah aerodrome. At the top of Shahur defile, the road twisted like a snake in the form of a 120° degree turn to the left before coming out of the defile into the open. The tactics of the tribes were centred on this snake's bend of the road where a bottle neck had to be created and the armoured cars were to be separated from the rest of the convoy. This was an exceedingly clever move of the tribesmen. Some-of their tactics in the battle field really baffled able commanders like Brigadier Auchinlek (later Field Marshal of Al Alamien fame), and Mohmand operations of 1935.

Armoured cars moved slowly, one by one. The tribesmen lay flat on their bellies, about a thousand feet directly above the armoured cars. Not a whisper. Not a stone moved. Army gunners in the turrets of armoured cars scanned the hills and the defile. There was a vertical slope of the hill right on to the roadside. As the last armoured car came on to the snake bend of 120 degress, the tribesmen began to roll huge rock boulders from the hill top. Scores of boulders were rolled down the hill-side and on to the roadside. Each boulder was about three feet by three feet. For a minute it appeared that as an after effect of rain fall, big stone boulders were sliding from the hill top. Within two minutes the entire road was completely blocked at a point from where the snake bend commenced. How cleverly the tribesmen achieved this road block, completely separating the six armoured cars from the convoy. The armoured cars were snookered as these were round the 120 degree snake bend and were completely separated physically and from a vision point of view from the rest of the convoy. Tribesmen's wish had come true.

As the first motor lorry approached the road block the driver was shot through the head. In his dying pain he could not avoid the road block. The motor lorry turned turtle over the stones and further created a complete block.

In a second, the five hundred tribal marauders

were on top of the convoy like wolves. No one was given a chance to jump down from the lorries and take up battle position on the ground. Whoever tried to get down from the lorry was shot before he could set his foot on the ground. Tribal bullets went through the defile, at the rate of thousands per minute. A preplanned attack is always deadly. Many did not know what was happening till men started dropping down dead like stones. To leave a lorry was exceedingly dangerous as you exposed yourself on the road and presented an easy target to the tribesmen who were in a firing position and well down on the ground behind huge boulders. But to remain in a lorry was equally dangerous because once infantry troops ceased to jump from lorries, it was taken for granted that only non combatant supply troops etc, were left on board the two hundred M.T. lorries and from thence onwards the entire show was a sitting target.

Armoured cars were snookered round the bend of the road. Rest was 'Money for Jam.'

A fat British Major, Officer Commanding of a company of Royal Indian Army Service Corps, jumped from the lorry and took cover in a ditch. He saw the entire shooting match and did a very quick mental calculation that it was not a shooting match organised on principles of cricket but was a one sided story. He watched two tribesmen advance towards where he hid in a ditch. Tribesmen thought he was dead so they were advancing to take his revolver, uniform and whatever money he carried. This old British Major watched them approach, upto two hundred yards. He stood up and ran 'hell for leather' over the hills and vales of Shahur Tangi towards the direction of Jandola Fort which was the home of South Waziristan Scouts. He kept on the proper bearing after having left the road completely. The two tribesmen were young and nimble footed, and followed the fat English major at a terrific gallop.

Six months later I heard the story from a far off relation of one of the two tribesmen, who related the incident at the house of a local Khan who lives in our neighbourhood at D.I.K.

"The fat English major disappeared into a nullah bed and emerged over the other steep bank like lightening.

We kept at his heels over a distance of two miles breaking into a trot or gallop as the occasion arose. But the British fat major with a tummy was like a race horse. We were keen on catching him alive as a living British Major would be worth a ransom of twenty thousand rupees whereas in the dead state it meant a two Wapiti Squadron load ful of bombs on tribal villages. At the end of two miles of trot and gallop after the fat British Major, We were so much out of breath and full of laughter that we gave up the chase. Said I to may comrade with peels of laughter 'Khushdil-I think the damn fellow has been playing Hockey with the Indian troops".

Eventually, towards the direction of Jandola fort, the fat British Major, saw a party of South Waziristan Scouts advancing towards Shahur Tangi for action. Wireless messages from the armoured cars had been picked up by Jandola fort, Manzai, Sarwakai, and Tank. Fort Miranshah was given an S.O.S. from Jandola. "Convoy ambushed in Shahur Tangi immediate tactical support requried. Watch out for ground signals from Tochi Scouts and 16th Punjab in the area of Shahur Tangi-Commandant S.W. Scouts".

F/O Williams of No. 5 A.C. squadron took off from Fort Miranshah within ten minutes from the receipt of S;O.S. In the meantime, killings continued in the Tangi. It was a one sided merciless show staged by Khonia Khel, disciple of Fakir of Ipi. Dead and wounded filled the narrow defile as groans of wounded could be heard for miles. At least one hundred Indian troops were killed and two hundred wounded. This included several officers. Last man to be shot dead was a Pathan King's commissioned Indian Officer; Captain Nisar Durrani. He was a medical officer in the Indian Medical Service. He was educated in England and obtained a medical degree from the University of Edinburgh. Captain Nisar Durrani died fighting with a revolver in his hand. He had almost emptied the magazine firing towards the tribesmen, while lying in a firing position on the rising ground and behind cover of big boulders. A bullet pierced his heart and he fell down and died instaneously. His body was brought back to D.I.K. where his father was an Eexcutive Engineer in Government Service,. The old man was struck with grief on seeing the dead body of a very able son.

Within forty minutes from the massacre at Shahur Tangi F/O Williams a British Officer from No. 5 A.C. Squadron Miranshah raced his Wapiti to the scene of occurance. A very strong detachment of South Waziristan Scouts from Jandola and a battalion of 16th Punjab from Manzai were racing down to the near approaches of Shahur Tangi. A section of armoured cars also had left Manzai. The entire Air Force at Miranshah was alerted. All troops in garrisons at Jandola, Manzai, Sarwakai, Wana, Razmak and Tank were ordered to stand by as a major show-down was expected. It was feared that at least five thousand tribesmen in the form of a well organised lashkar (Tribal army) had destroyed the entire convoy. More were expected to join in as each of the fourteen grown up sons of Khonia Khel commanded a Lashkar and were apt to rush in reinforcements to Shahur Tangi in order to save their father. But the tribesmen know their tactics well and never prolong a single day's battle. Wars are prolonged over periods of a few years but a single day's battle is never extended beyond a period through which the tribesmen have already exercised the major principles of war, i.e. surprise, maintenance of aim, and economy of force. After a day's battle a very quiet retreat is effected through the ravines and nullah beds; keeping well under cover of shady banks of Khwars and Algads.

Williams knew the situation and commenced straffing of slopes of hills on either side of the butchered convoy. He swooped down and dropped a twenty pounder antipersonnel bomb and then straffed the rising slopes with his front Vickers machine guns. Ground troops and reinforcements from Jandola and Manzai took a little time in deploying. Armoured cars from Manzai were just reaching the spot but the road was blocked with badly shot up vehicles.

Not heeding for his own safety, F/O Williams dived and zoomed up as bomb and vickers attack was carried out. In the sixth dive a volley of shots was fired on him as he dived down to a low altitude. A bullet pierced his oil tank and splashed oil all over the cockpit and his face. He left Shahur Tangi in order to make for the landing ground at Jandola or Manzai. Near Kot Kai fort his oil pressure went down to zero and the engine siezed up. Williams made a forced landing on the road

just outside Kotkai fort. The aircraft went off the road and crashed. There were live bombs on board. Luckily she did not catch fire.

A party of scouts rushed out from the fort with fixed buyonets and retrieved F/O Williams and his air gunner before the tribesmen could reach them. Five days later; D.F.C. was awarded to F/O Williams by the order of A.O.C. in C. India Command; Sir Edgar Ludlow Hewitt.

From Mohmand operations, of 1935 and throughout Waziristan war of 1937-1945, only four D.F.C's were awarded. In the Mohmand operations, an Australian Pilot F/O Anderson was awarded a D.F.C. Then F/O Williams got in June 1937. Molly Malone got it in 1938 and Aspee in 1941.

No doubt, in Shahur Tangi, the tribesmen displayed bravery of a very high order. Country folks in the far and near reaches of Waziristan sang 'Ballad of Shahur Tangi' composed by a Pathan poet. When I was on leave in D.I.K. feelings of people were divided. The educated types who believed in law and order were exceedingly angry with the tribesmen. Nisar Durrani's father's grief at the death of a very able son brought a very strong feeling of hatred towards the tribesmen.

I had hardly spent ten days at home, during which I had loved a morning's swim in the river Indus, when a telegram arrived from Philip; "Report on duty at Peshawar, immediately. Proceeding to Miranshah for Operations". I was very angry indeed because only the previous evening I had a chance of meeting a pretty village damsel who promised to see more of me I did not get a chance of meeting her again. I filled up my green Chevrolet two seater sports with petrol and oil and headed for Peshawar in the very early hours of the next morning. The sun came up over a dust covered horizon behind the peak of Sheikh Buddin. When I reached Bannu it was exceedingly hot. After crossing bed of Kurram river, the hills on the left side of the road were covered in a dust haze. Captain Nisar Durrani's assasination had produced intensive hatred in my mind against the tribes. If I had a chance, I would massacre them ruthlessly.

Within a few days we flew down to Miranshah and the road convoy arrived a day later through Bannu.

No. 20 Squadron were exceedingly pleased, After nearly four months of operations, they were to return to Peshawar. Many of them were procceeding on leave to Sirinagar in Kashmir. A few were going on leave to England.

At Miranshah, two flights of No. 5 A.C. Squadron and one flight of I.A.F. remained. Flight Lieutenant Hamblin took over as O.C. Miranshah. At that time we were short of trained air gunners. A.C's Wali Mohd, Ghulam Ali, Ali Mohd and Mohd Salim were still under training. No. 20 Squadron R.A.F. were exceedingly nice in giving us four of their best trained air gunners, LAC Watson, LAC Sands, LAC Colbert, and LAC Buckley. They were exceedingly good and helped us tremendously for a period of one month when our own air gunners commenced operational sorties with us. LAC Colbert was a very interesting type. He was exceedingly good in his work but was a terrific fighting cock. Colbert was promoted to the rank of a corporal twice and twice he was demoted for giving a black eye to a senior N.C.O. Probably Miranshah and wild environments produced a fighting spirit. We started tribal operations by escorting convoys and carrying out road patrols between Saidgi Damdil, Razani Camp and Razmak. Gradually we took on duties of close support to Bannu Brigade and Razmak Brigade when deployed in the hills. Philip, Mukerjee, I, Aspee and Habibullah Khan took on sortie after sortie in support of ground troops. On many occasions we fired front and rear machine guns and dropped 20 pounder bombs when wireless messages or ground signals were received.

One morning an infantry brigade was out about eight miles north west of Razmak cantonment and were punishing a certain village in the region of high hills lying to the right of high peak Pre Ghal (16,000 ft). May air gunner A.C. Ghulam Ali noticed ground signals and tapped me on the back. I selected the bomb fuses and made nose and tail pistols alive. Bomb release lever was put in the neutral and ready position as I commenced to dive on the target. Bomb was released. In the same dive I opened up a short burst of front machine gun fire. After pulling out of the dive I placed the machine between the target and our troops and asked Ghulam Ali to open up with the rear Lewis gun. This was repeated, Several

times till we finished all bombs and Vickers and Lewis gun ammunition. Then I asked Ghulam Ali to reel out the areal. I switched on R/T and called up Razmak and Miranshah "I have expended all bombs and ammunition. Shall remain on target for a further half hour. Relieving sortie may please be sent immediately".

After the half hour, I asked Ghulam Ali to wind in the aerial. We flew towards Miranshah at the termination of my sortie. Over Razmak Narai I saw F/O Tim close of No. 5 Squadron coming up from the opposite direction. Both aircraft waggled their wings as a mutual compliment and a 'good morning'.

Next day Timm close was sent to Wana for a close support sortie in the vicinity of Tiarza post. Tim forgot to refuel at Wana and proceeded back to Miranshah after the day's work. In the vicinity of Damdil camp when still over high hills, his petrol finished and propellor stopped. There was not a chance in Hell to make a forced landing in the steep hills. So Tim jumped with a parachute after having signalled to his air gunner to jump. Tim's parachute opened and he descended on the hills His poor air gunner was killed. His parachute got entangled in the aircraft and both were wrecked on the side of the hill overlooking Damdil camp.

That evening, after Tennis, I had a hot bath and turned up late in the mess. I found Philip, Hamblin, Mukerjee, Aspee, Habibullah Khan, Majumdar and all other officers of No. 5 Squadron R.A.F. including Monty Birch and F/O King etc. looking very quiet indeed. Squadron Leader Bill anchors O.C. No. 5 Squadron Chaklala, Rawalpindi, who was supposed to take over a wing with the inclusion of No. 1 Squadron I.A.F., also, had a small glass of Sherry in his hand. 'What is the matter' I asked. Philip replied "Timm close has not returned back from Wana. We telephoned Wana. He left that place at 5-30 P.M. He is now over due by four hours and is presumed to have been shot down. Bill Anchors is now going to take off and see if he can spot a light or flame or anything on top of hills". Bill Anchors took off in pitch darkness. Hills around Miranshah rose gradually to higher altitudes. Night flying was normally not permitted except in the very early hours of the morning and that too on a exceedingly important mission where

a garrison was biseiged. Bill Anchors was an exceedingly brave man. He was a typical example of a courageous man from the first world war of 1914-1918. After take off, Bill Anchors flew alround over the Miranshah hills and a part of the way towards Wana. After one hour he landed back without any clue. Same afternoon Bill Anchors had received a bullet in his main planes when flying upto Miranshah from Chaklala. He gave orders that no aircraft will fly lower than 3,000 feet from the nearest hill top. He was probably hit from the hill top just passed Swinwam, where a small hill not more than 2,000 ft. high lies on the direct track to Miranshah. All aircraft intending to land at Miranshah get fairly low over this hill as it is situated at about 20 miles from the aerodrome.

Timm close walked into the camp next morning about half an hour before sunrise. By now a party of Tochi Scouts had got to the scene of the crash. The dead air gunner's body was further mutilated by the tribesmen. Tochi Scouts brought the dead body of the air gunner back to Fort Miranshah. There was such a commotion amongst the airmen. Our Flight Sergeant Hickey was also very annoyed and angry. "Some of the officers are real Cads. They jump out with a parachute and do not even tell the poor airman. This air gunner was killed because Mr. Close did not inform him to jump out". However, all officers hung their heads in sorrow. The fact remained that Tim close had signalled to the airman but he was a bit late in jumping.

A pilot from No. 5 Squadron was sent to get an oblique photograph of the crashed aircraft but no success was achieved. Then Flight Lieutenant Hamblin asked Philip to send an Indian pilot. Philip asked me to take Bulbul Khan and get an oblique. We located the crash on a very steep slope of a fairly high peak. Several low runs were made and Habeeb produced a most wonderful photograph of the crashed aircraft.

A full military funeral was given to the dead British air gunner. Poor Timm close was really sorry for what had happened. He needed a little change from this grim scene of tragedy. His brother was an officer in a regiment of armoured cars in Bannu. After two days,

Hamblin asked me to drop Tim at Bannu landing ground where his brother would pick him up.

I flew Timm down to Islam Chauki landing ground. An armoured car was already at the landing ground and was making a Chukker round the field. When I landed and turned the aircraft round, Timm's brother came out of the armoured car and shook hands with his brother. I was so happy to see the love and affection between two brothers. How, almighty God had created the same love and affection between brothers whether they were English or Indian. I expect if my younger brother had turned up at Islam Chawki he would also have been so happy to see me. I smiled and waved out to both the brothers as I took off. I saw both the brothers get into the armoured car and drive away towards Bannu Cantonment where they spent a fortnight together. I swooped down, on Saidgi out post to find if all was well. Proper signal 'All is well' was given to me and I headed for Miranshah,

An army Column was moving out from Razmak to punish the tribes in the vicinity of Asman Manza, Sherwangi Narai and Tiarza Post near Wana. This time four 8" guns were being taken to put the fright of God into tribesmen by carrying out long range bombarment of the few suburbs of villages which were warned to evacuate. Brigadier Maynard was marching out with the whole of his Bannu Brigade as a strong punitive action against a certain section of Wazirs and Mahsuds. An air force officer was supposed to accompany the column for a period of fourteen days. When the army signal arrived at Miranshah; Hamblin asked Philip to produce an Indian officer as the brunt of aerial warfare was being borne by the Indian Air Force at Miranshah. Philip out of good humour did not want to order anyone so he asked for volunteers in the mess, when everyone had assembled that evening for a cold drink before moving in to supper. Philip was quite clear in his mind as to who the fellow would be but still he asked for volunteers. He smiled and looked at Mukerjee. Hamblin as Fort Commander R.A.F. Miranshah was also watching the proceedings with a broad smile. Mukerjee pulled a long face and said "Fancy trekking around with an army column in the wake of mules and things. I can't walk for nuts and here you

would ask me to keep up pace with Bannu brigade whose average rate of covering distances is seven miles an hour, from the date of commencement of operations in Waziristan". There was loud laughter in the mess. Then Philip looked towards Aspee who replied "I hate walking in the company of mules and men who trot at a very fast pace. Mules have a filthy habit of kicking. I came out of hospital only two months ago. I do not want to go there again". "Bulbul, Majumdar and Narendra, have just arrived in the operations" said Philip. "They have to learn a lot before they can conduct operations from the ground. Therefore, there is no other choice but Awan who will report at Razmak on Monday morning with the ground signals party consisting of two B.O.R's from 5 Squadron and an army pack mule carrying W/T sets etc." I made a face but it cut no ice. It merely produced more laughter from all those intrepid birdmen, not fond of foot slogging.

On Monday morning we reached Razmak by road after having been escorted by Tochi Scouts upto Razani. We were all rigged up in the army battle dress, with haversack, water bottle, colt automatic, binoculars, and heavy marching footwear (Chaplis) for mountain warfare, I carried all my maps, message pads, pencil, Popham Pannel Code books, close support codes, etc. etc. At Razmak I had lunch at the brigade officers mess. A convoy of heavy lorries left for Asman Manza. On the way we passed some grim looking tribesmen. I could understand from their talk that there would be an open fight. A section of light tanks was escorting our convoy consisting of about one hundred heavy M.T. vehicles. As we crossed a mountain stream a shot was heard and a tribal bullet hit a British troop in a light tank. It is really incredible how a bullet could have found the mark through an observation slit in a light tank. At this time, the British troop was peeping through the observation slit.

Road between Razmak and Asman Manza was heavily piqueted by 6/13th Frontier Force. I saw an old school friend Lieutenant Ajit Singh Sodhi at a machine gun post on the left of the road. It started to rain. Roof of our transport leaked badly and I was soaking wet by the time we reached Asman Manza. A tent was allotted to me. It was the month of September in 1937 but it

was bitterly cold during rainfall and at a height of 8,000 feet above sea level. Asman Manza was a beautiful site perched on top of a lonely hill approximately 8,000 feet high. It could not be sniped from any direction as other hills were at a distance greater than a thousand yards. A tribal bullet is almost ineffective at a distance of one thousand yards or more. In the officer's mess there were a General or two who had probably come down from Simla to have a look at the operations. Brigadier Maynard and his Brigade Major were exceedingoy nice to me.

I was attached to the Brigade Head Quarters. I was given an orderly from the Punjab Regiment. Next evening two 8 inch guns went into firing position on top of the hill at Asman Manza. Only six shots were fired at a remote village lying down below in the valley at a distance of about eight miles. A direct hit was avoided. This particular village had contained men of a lashkar which attacked Razmak Brigade in the Sherwangi Narai about a month ago. Both sides deployed into a hand to hand fighting position. Fighting continued throughout the day. Sherwangi was one of the few places throughout the length of operations in Waziristan during 1937-1938, where thousands of tribesmen came out in the open. Under cover of trees, tribesmen crept upto machine gun positions and assaulted with rifle and dagger. The dead and wounded filled Sherwangi Narai for days.

During next day's march from Asman Manzai to wards Tiarza post where we were to demolish a fort belonging to Sher Ali, a lieutenant of Faqir of Ipi; when we passed through Sherwangi Narai, stumps of trees and bushes and stones still had splashes of blood on both sides. I picked up a beautiful walnut walking stick covered in blood as a souvenir of Sherwangi Narai. Apparently a wounded tribesman had used it as a support for limping back to his village after the day's battle. Probably, this man died and was carried by his comrades as the stick was discarded and was lying by the side of a mountain stream, covered with thick walnut trees. For years I kept this stick as a souvenir of Waziristan operations 1937-38.

After firing six shots only, a white flag came up from the middle of the militant village. Within half an hour, four hostages and one thousand rifles were produced

as a guarantee for good behaviour, by the residents of this village only.

During dinner Brigadier Maynard was in good humour. In our tent, with a hurricane lantern dangling from a string in the centre; on that cold wintry evening in a desolate army camp, Brigadier Maynard; a kind, jolly old man about fifty five, told this story "An army officer was flying over the hills of Waziristan with an intrepid aviator of the air force. After a very long reconnaissance sortie stretched over a period of three hours; the army officer saw a line of fluid flowing into the rear cockpit from the front. The poor man was petrified; fearing that the aircraft had sprung a petrol leak. Therefore he got down to investigate the characteristics of the fluid and passed a chit to the pilot which read "There is a fluid leaking into the rear cockpit from the front. I am sure it is not petrol as I have tasted it".

The intrepid aviator looked back at the Army officer through his goggles and laughed loudly". Here everyone in the mess, burst out laughting.

Brig. Maynard was a grand old scout. He was the first one to break into Fakir of Ipi's home at Arsol Kot. He was the man who broke the back of operations in Waziristan by December 1937 when Tori Khel and Madda Khel lashkars had been routed. Brig. Maynard did not believe in modern strategy and Tactics. He believed that best strategy and tactics were those employed in the first world war of 1914-1918 when he was a Captain in the army. He went even a step further and was of the opinion that Boer War was one of the toughest that Britain ever fought. Hand to hand fighting with Buyonet and dagger thrilled Brig. Maynard. He was a successful commander of Bannu Brigade and leader of Tocol Operations. Everytime Razcol operated, casualties went up to a hundred. Brig. Maynard went through Arsol Kot, and Gariom to Sherwangi Narai with the loss of a few troops only. He always considered army as number one in operations and gave the second place to the air force.

My company must have had a good effect on the old man. In December 1937 when he retired and was given the distinction of being an A.D.C. to King George the VI, emperor of India; and before he left Razmak for Bannu on his way to London; he made a fervent request

to be given a joy ride with an intrepid aviator before he said goodbye to the vale of Waziristan. I am not sure whether it was F/O Majumdar of I.A.F. or Squadron Leader Hamblin of No. 5 Squadron R.A.F. and Fort Commander Miranshah who flew down to Razmak and gave a joy ride to the dear old man, Brig. Maynard. He loved it.

Operational orders for next morning gave a very early marching order. In the freezing cold of Asman Manza, by the light of a hurricane butty I shaved and washed in my tent quickly before I put on shorts and shirt, warm sweater, water bottle, haversack containing all operational maps and codes for close support and artillery shooting etc. and a colt automatic. Thick stockings, short putties and tribal chaplis were worn. When I came out, the brigade had already formed up in the marching out order in accordance with the previous day's instructions. In pitch darkness at 4-30 A.M. a whole brigade consisting of 8,000 troops and about 1,000 mules, had formed up in the shape of a column. It was exceedingly difficult to locate three of my B.O.R's with a pack mule carrying W/T and R/T sets. I remembered Brigade Signals Officer Lieutenant Ayappa saying that my 3 B.O.R's and one mule will be at the rear of Signal's company Royal Indian Corps of Signals. But in God's name where was that signal's Company and the Boyal Indian Corps of signals: only a prophet or a magician could tell under the light of the stars. My orderly and I walked about four hundred yards down the length of the column and asked for the identity of formations but the Indian Corps of signals was nowhere to be found. Under the circumstances I thought It best to attach myself to a platoon of infantiers who were nearby; and march along till day break when the company of signals and my own mule and three B.O.R's could be located.

A Trumpet was sounded from the top of Asman Manza camp. The column marched forward like black magic. There was no road or track. The entire column was winding along a narrow foot path. On either side, guides from local villages who were in the pay of the Political agent indicated correct direction and the way. Mules were all over the place. A whole company of animal transport was commanded by Captain Mohd Akbar

who later attained fame in the evacuation of Dunkirk and who later became one of the G.O.C's of Pak. Army. Every machine gun company of the three infantry battalions had at least a hundred mules to carry, machine guns, tripods, ammunition and kit. Signals company also had a hundred mules. Mules and men filled the whole column. I and my Punjabi orderly kept a good distance from the nearest mule in the dark for fear of a kick. Actually I was wrong. A mule never kicks anyone in the dark. It is only during daylight that a mule might object to an Air Force type trotting around in circles. A mule is a funny female. She never likes strangers in the near vicinity of her well preserved rump. And what a clever animal she is! When a convoy is on the march, mules keep their heads down on the job and regulate their pace with their human masters. In battle also, mule after mule is hit with the tribal bullet. The poor darling merely sinks down with her load; stretches her neck and passes away peacefully. When on duty and at the job, a mule never murmurs or grumbles. An exceedingly intelligent animal. On number of occasions I heard our nearest piquet open up with machine gun fire in reply to tribal sniping. Mules always pricked their ears up and looked in he direction of sniping. Animal instinct told them the direction of danger. In a hand to hand fight when the tribesmen laid a successful ambush and jumped on a rear portion of the convoy, mules joined in a free for all fight with kicks and bites. Many a tribesman will remember a mule's kick in a hand to hand fight, when the master was struck with a tribal dagger.

When dawn broke, I was amazed to see a mile long column moving at a very fast pace. We crossed a mountain stream. The bed of the stream was covered with stones and pebbles. On the other bank there was a steep climb up the hill. The track was narrow as it had been cut out of rock. Hundreds of mules had splashed water and mud on this steep track with the result that it became very slippery indeed. One of the mules slipped bock. She was over loaded and prabably had passed her prime. As she slipped backwards all the load of machine guns and tripods slipped to her hind quarters. But she was exceedingly brave. She held her bent down position with all the weight on her rear legs. Immediately about a dozen men rushed to her aid. Three men pushed her

backside upwards and forwards. Some-one shouted "Let go, the pulling of reins. Leave her alone. Do not pullher'. She pulled heself forward and was soon on top of the track. Then all men let go the reins and left the mules to their own sweet will how they tackled the steep climb on a slippery track. It was unbelieveable! I waded through the cold stream and watched the fun. A mule is an exceedingly clever animal. All the rear ones had watched the poor old darling struggling under the weight of machine guns on a slippery climb. They knew how to tackle the slippery climb. Men let go the pulling of reins when the mules came in mid stream. The animals were free to choose their own tactics. It was amazing! Almost every mule got a good trotting speed when she came in mid stream, and then went up the slippery climb with that initial momentum; keeping her head well down.

In my opinion, war in Waziristan was not won by human beings. It was won by animal transport. Very soon I located company of the Royal Indian Signals. Lieutenant Ayappa was nicely trotting along-side his mules. I found my three B.O.R's and a pack mule, We nick named Sally. Dawn patrol was already overhead. An aircraft dropped a message by swooping down fairly low over the column. This was at the end of his dawn sortie. This message was brought to me. No movement of tribes had been spotted and all our machine guns and infantry piquets on top of Sherwangi Narai displayed 'All is Well'.

I ran along the column and found Brigadier Maynard and his brigade Major nicely marching along with the troops. The old man was really brave. He kept pace with his young Indian troops who were probably thirty five years younger than he was. Brig. Maynard kept a Webley and Scott repeater ready by his side. A party of twelve selected Indian troops formed a special bodyguard around Brigadiar Maynard. This was a safeguard against a determined fanatic party of tribesmen who some times jumped on the Brigade Commander with a view to assissinating him. Such suicide squads were not very common in tribal operations but these had occurred on a few occasions since 1921 when a handful of grey bearded fanatics jumped on the Brigade Commander after recognising him in a column. The grey bearded thought this

act of suicide squad would earn them martyrdom. After all they were so near to grave already.

As I approached Brigadier Maynard, I Sprang to 'attention' and saluted smartly "Dawn sortie reports, All's well, Sir" said I. Brig. Maynard replied "That is very good indeed, young fellow. I hope all goes well. I suspect trouble through Sherwangi Narai. Please tell your aviators to give special attention to the machine gun piquets on top of Sherwangi hills, See me around ten O clock when we enter the narrow gorge. I may have some immediate orders for close support on certain vital points if they attack us in the gorge". "Very good, Sir, I shall report at the entrance of the gorge" was my reply as I saluted, about turned and made off at a fast pace.

Sally & my three B. O. R's were jogging along nicely. Senior B. O. R. who was a Corporal in No. 5 Squadron had his earphones plugged into the radio set which sally carried so patiently. I plugged in a second pair of phones as we moved along the stony track over the hills. Radio telephony was coming in very clearly. "Tocol, this is Daffodil six. Tiarza Post enquires progress of column". I say again. Tiarza Post enquires progress of Column". I asked the B. O. R. Corporal to reply "Daffodil Six. This is Tocol. Inform Tiarza Post all is well. Front of column one mile from Sherwangi Narai, new". This was done, and the aircraft flew away towards Wana and Tiarza Post.

When the head of Column reached the gorge I rushed up to Brig. Maynard and stayed with him and the Brigade Major. Dreadful hill tops with thick fortests held their heads in angry disdain. A solitary tribal bullet eame whistling throught the gorge. Our machine gun posts on top of the peak on the left replied with a rapid burst of fire. Calm prevalied and the column moved on. A very fast pace was maintained throughout the length of the narrow gorge at Sherwangi. On emerging out of the gorge we arrived on top of a high ground which provided a clear view towards the high peaks of Durand line in the west. About 30 degerees towards the left; peaks of Wana were clearly visible. A ten minute's breather was given to the whole Brigade. Officers and men sat down on rocks to rest their weary limbs.

I heard a rattle of machine gun fire and could not mistake it, as it was the latest Vickers Machine gun fired through the propellor at 1200 rounds per minute with the help of Constantinesco's gun synchronising gear. Why on earth people in those days believed in firing through a propellor? It was just as easy to fix a gun on the main planes and have remote control cable to trip the trigger. I looked at the horizon and saw an aircraft of No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. or 5 Squadron R.A.F. carrying out straffing of sheep and goats beyod the hump of a high mountain. She would swoop down into the valley and then there was a rattle of front Vickers machine guns followed by the slow interrupted firing of a rear Lewis machine gun. Infantry units were still resting. Animal transport Company under Captain Mohd Akbar Khan was ordered to proceed to our camp site which was still eight miles away. I had a chance of getting away from Brigade H.Q. and had a cup of tea with the officers of 6/13th Frontier Force. Lieutenants Nazir Ahmad, Adam Khan, Rodriques, Atma Singh, Rana Bakhtiar, Azam etc. were all there. We enjoyed a few dog's biscuits and a hot cup of tea.

It is really incredible what the poor British and Indian armies got in war. Ration Biscuits were so hard that you could not eat them unless these were dipped in a boiling hot cup of tea. Hence the name 'Dogs biscuits' was given by officers and troops. The Only good and refreshing thing was a cup of tea which was always so very welcome in the middle of a battle; whether it was on the North West Frontier or in Arakan during World War II.

We got to our camp site almost under the shadow of rock of Wana, on the banks of a wide nullah which contained sufficient quantity of water. Fields had been well irrigated and there was sufficient quantity of maize and other crops in the green fields. Camels grazed freely up and down the hilly slopes. There were sufficient sheep and goats also busy in grazing. Only minor punishment was inflicted on two of the village chiefs who had large houses and tall observation towers. Head Quarter of Waziristan army had anticipated trouble as Sher Ali one of the Maliks or tribal chiefs whose house had to be pulled down by Madras Sappers and Miners, was an able lieutenant of the Fakir of Ipi. Thousands of tribes would have

resented Sher Ali's house and observation tower being pulled down by the Indian Army. A tremendous provocation existed and we expected a very sharp fight. However, everything was kept a secret. No one knew the purpose of the mission of this column from Asman Manza till next day when we surrounded the village after having declared full protection for women and children and aged ones. Full operational plans were only known to Brigadier Maynard and the Brigade Major.

Approximately twenty miles from our camp site and approximately thirty degrees to the right of Wana where wild hills held up their angry heads, an area was proscribed for the Air Force. Probably men from these areas were responsible for the massacre in Shahur Tangi. Aircraft after aircraft swooped down low and opened fire on camels, sheep and goat. Tribesmen had almost taken all their cattle out from the proscribed area in the near vicinity of the Durand Line.

Tea and supper was served quite early in the camp. When I returned back to my tent, it was quite cold and the tent looked too small. A fox hole or a small trench had been dug up on top of which my tent was erected. Sleeping was to be inside the trench as there was a potential danger of sniping at night. Early in the evening, thousands of, Hurricane butty's were extinguished as 'lights out' orders were carried out at 8 P.M. I slipped into a pair of pyjamas and was fast asleep. In the middle of night heavy footsteps were heard within a few paces from my tent. I knew that it was a party of tribesmen who had infiltrated through a very strong screen of piquets and they meant a night raid using daggers which could be exceedingly dangerous as the tribesmen and Mahsuds in particular are masters of art in using a dagger at night. I clutched at my colt automatic and held my breath for a second or two. Then there was a stampede as a mule bolted. Many men must have been frightened by this mule which had broken loose inside the camp. Dawn revealed that one sepoy and one mule had been shot on the previous night. Tribesmen wanted to break through but were repulsed by several piquets. Brigadier Maynard was quite pleased at losing only one sepoy and a mule. This place was a death trap, and, but for modern technique; a whole Brigade would have been annihilated.

Soon after breakfast, the Brigade moved out and by midday Sappers and Miners were busy in detonating several heavy charges of dynamite in blowingup houses and watch towers of several maliks. I was busy in reading a message dropped by the last sortie when a loud report was heard. I saw debris and earth hurled high up in the air as a Malik's watch tower disappeared. Several loud reports were heard. Several pilots asked what was going on down below as earth and debris was being flung towards the sky. I informed them that punishment was being inflicted by the column.

After blowing up the houses and towers of two leading maliks it was considered necessary to quit the vicinity of those villages. Brigade was therefore ordered to move along at a fast pace back to Asman Manza and then to Razmak which meant two day's march.

Brigade Major asked me to communicate to all pilots that a close liason with all piquets was essential when withdrawing towards Asman Manza. This order was complied with and all aircraft remained over the piquets for a close watch and liason. Piquets withdrew with the speed of lightening as the tail of column came opposite to them. It was always in a withdrawal that the rear most piquet was wiped out. Training for tribal warfare had made our men experts at withdrawing a piquet. Machine guns and tripods were detached and loaded on mules in ten seconds, and then men and mules came down the slope at a running pace till they joined the rear of the column and were within cover of the next qiquet to be withdrawn along the line of March. In a narrow defile we were once again brought to a stand still as a party of brave tribesmen had crept up to a piquet and shot a Sikh sepoy in the thigh. A Sikh's beard on a hill top in Waziristan had the same effect as waving of a red cloth to a bull in Spain. Whenever the tribesman saw a Sikh piquet, invariably there was a fight. In this particular case the tribesman had advanced under cover of trees and shrubs to almost within twenty yards of where a Sikh sentry of a piquet stood. Shot was fired from such close quarters that the poor sepoy's thigh was torn to bits. Tribesmen withdrew under cover of thick trees and bushes. Machine guns from this piquet barked almost in three directions but the man had withdrawn below curvature of

the crest. And a tribesman is exceedingly clever in going down to ground and taking cover behind boulders and large stones during exchange of fire. With these tactics he has always avoided major damage even on occasions when a few thousand tribesmen were engaged in a close quarter battle.

Column was held up for one hour. Yonder, to the right of Razmak and in the near vicinity of Taúda China village, proscription bombing was being carried out from the air- In this operation, Philip, Mukerjee and Aspee carried 250 lbs. bombs and dropped these in high altitude level bombing. Here I was getting browned off trotting around with army mules. Over the horizon when I saw a speck which looked like a Wapiti returning back to Miranshah from Tauda China after a bombing sortie, I longed to get back home to Miranshah. To a pilot there is nothing more beautiful and loveable as the home aerodrome of operations. The noise of engines and a continuous buzzing of aircraft produces music which is more pleasant than music from a string orchestra.

Nearly twenty five days had passed without a bath. I had collected a few bugs and lice from sleeping in damp trenches and fox holes. I kept on scratching my body and longed for a hot shower at the officers mess Miranshah.

In that difficult position, more troops had to be rushed out as reinforcements from Razmak; before we could resume our march onwards. When we reached Razmak, the column was dead tired. My liason job was finished. In the brigade mess at Razmak, everyone rushed in for a hot bath. An R. A. F. transport was returning back to Fort Miranshah. I did not lose a minute in dumping my haversack and kit bag in this transport. I was exceedingly sorry that I could not even say goodbye to brigadier Maynard, Brigade Major and other friends of Bannu Brigade. I said goodbye to the Staff Captain who I remember said something about another column going out in a few days time. I had enough of bugs and lice and sleeping in trenches and fox holes, with damp clothes, for twenty five days; my body ached allover. There is nothing in the world to beat a pilot's home aerodrome.

When I reached Miranshah I had a hot shower and then changed into a new warm uniform which I had

used during the Coronation. I switched on the radio-gram in the officers mess. Gigli's classical singing filled the air with sweet music. I stroked my hair on which Bryl cream had been applied. I asked the Abdar to bring me a large orange squash as I sank back into a comfortable sofa with a latest copy of illustrated Tatler. That sweet music, and pictures of English Popsies in our beautiful officers mess at Miranshah was so heavenly. In walked young Hamblin and Philip "Hallo Soldier-how are you. Was it good fun trekking with the army in the wild wooly hills of Waziristan?" said They. I replied "It went off very well indeed, but I have been bitten badly by bugs and lice in vital parts of my anatomy. My body is swollen up in lumps in many places". Habibullah, Mukerjee Aspee, and Majumdar were so happy to see me.

Next day I was made to do a few circuits and bumps in Wapiti J9723 before proceeding on an operational sortie. After having spent twenty five days with the army in the field, I was now an expert on army cooperation. In escorting a column I could always anticipate when trouble would commence. my anticipation was almost correct every time. In a narrow defile I could tell correctly from the air where our column would run into trouble. Invariably I got the signal at the correct spot,

Waziristan was full of military camps and forts. Mirali, Damdil, Ladha, Razmak, Wana, Sara rogha, Serwakai, Kot Kai, Jandola, Manzai, Tiarza, Miranshah, Bannu, Gariom, Razani, Bichi Kash Kai. At each post or fort at least one or two battalions of infantry and ancilliary services were maintained. A regiment of armoured cars had their headquarters at Bannu, but sections were maintained at Razmak, Wana, Jandola and Miranshah for carrying out regular road patrols. Without their help, those beautiful long military roads stretching from Bannu to Razmak, Wana, Jandola, Tank, Mirali and Thal could not have been ketp open.

Mukerjee, I, Aspee, Majumdar, Narendra and Habib carried out regular army cooperation sorties over the entire area of Waziristan. Bannu, Wana, Razmak, and Mirali contained a whole Brigade each with sections of armoured cars, and a battery of mountain guns etc. and ancillary services. By now almost all of us had

dropped live bombs and fired thousands of front gun bullets. All of us were now in the category of expert army cooperation pilots.

On 7th September an urgent telephone call was received from the Brigade Major Manzai. Sarfaraz Gundapur a notorous outlw was leading a party of Mahsud armed raiders into setlled Tehsils of Chaudhwan and Kulachi in D. I. K. district. After routing a detachment of local police, this party of armed tribal dacoits had uplifted a large number of sheep and cattle and were endeavouring to enter a region of high hills through the Gomal pass and thence to Sarwakai. A regular battalion of 16th Punjab Regiment from Manzai, Supported by armoured cars had been despatched to mouth of Gomal pass to cut off the retreat of Sarfaraz Gundapur and his mahsuds, to the hills, and retrieve all uplifted cattle. This was a special mission. Close support had to be given to the 16th Punjab and a detachment of South Waziristan Scouts who were on the move from Girni post with a view to establishing contact with the tribesmen and cutting off their retreat into the region of high hills.

Philip our Flight Commandar gave this task to me. My blood always used to boil whenever tribesmen raided my home district of D. I. K.

I started up the faithful Wapiti J9723. Sixteen 20 lbs. bombs, 500 rounds of front gun and 500 rounds of rear gun amunition had been put on board. My flyiug overall always carried Popham Panel code book, artillary codes, close support code message pads, coloured message bags and all the junk that a poor army cooperation pilot carries. Lac Sowerby and Kartar Singh had taken pins out of the bombs. Gun synchronising gear constantinesco had been warmed up and air had been expelled out of the system. I saw Lac Colbert carrying a Lewis gun on his shoulder from the armoury. He fixed it on the steel scarf ring of the rear cockpit and jumped in. I waved the chocks away. After take off I passed low over the Tochi river and than put my nose into a steep climb over Damdil camp. In Waziristan navigation is done by hedge hopping from one hill top to another, Prominent land marks like rock of Sararogha, Seven sister hills of Razmak, Preghul peak, Camels hump of Kajuri Kach, Rock of wana, Bannu fort hill, etc. are familiar land marks which pilots in

Waziristan remembered by heart. I never opened a map of Waziristan in the air although a 1" to a mile and a quarter inch series was always available in the leg pockets of my flying overalls. When I passed over Sararogha hill I looked down on the village perched right on top of a hill. This was where Khonia Khel, the most blood thirsty tribal outlaw lived. A few tall observation towers clearly showed where Khonia Khel lived. Khonia Khel had killed one hundred men of the Wazir tribe one by one in blood fueds. An old tribal custom entitled him to bury his sword on a mountain top. This was a singular achievement which no tribal Malik had attained for the past one hundred years. Khonia Khel marched up to this mountain top in the vicinity of his village at Sararogha and drove the blade of a deadly sword, vertically down into a soft portion of the mountain top; upto the hilt; in the presence of a large gathering of Mahsuds and tribal maliks. What a man ! Massacre of Shahur Tangi in which a whole supply column was wiped out, was organised, planned and led by Khonia Khel. I grinned as the aircraft passed over Khonia Khel's mud fort. 'It is a pity that the British would not permit bombing and straffing of Khonia Khel's mud fort,' said I to myself as my aircraft flew on.

On reaching Manzai fort, I circled the aerodrome and then landed. Aircraft was taxied to a corner and switched off. A British Brigade Major had already arrived in a staff car when he saw the aircraft above Manzai. He shook hands with me and explained the whole situation to me. Sun was already setting. There was no point in taking off for close support at Gomal pass, during darkness. Manzai aerodrome had no lighting system for night landing. Therefore it was agreed that I would take off in the dark at 4 A.M. and reach the Gomal pass for close support.

That evening I slept in the officers mess 16th Punjab Regiment Manzai and had my dinner there also. Two hours before crack of dawn I took off in pitch darkness. It was quite an achievement those days as the aerodrome did not have even a single kerosene flare. My Wapiti had only the navigation lights but no landing lights. In pitch darkness I put the nose of the aircraft towards the high peaks of Girni post. In the light of the

twinkling stars I could make up the Camel's hump peak of Kajuri Kach. This peak has a double hump like an Arabian camel. It has a height of roughly 12,000 ft. above sea level. I looked back. Electric lights of Manzai fort could be seen far away on the horizon at the back. Girni post and Gomal bazaar also had a few kerosene oil lamps burning a feeble light. In the darkness I had a rough idea where the mouth of the pass was. I climbed to about 8,000 feet and kept clear of Kajuri Kach peaks. Above the rough position of pass I fired a green vary light. Immediately there was a reply and burning of flares from ground troops. I remained over this area till twilight made it possible for me to read the ground signals from a low height. I got fairly low in the narrow gorge of Gomal river. High hills loomed above. Ground troops were exceedingly prompt in displaying singnals and codes. I took down long messages. Apparently contact had not been established with the raiders. In a pinned down position the raiders let go all the cattle which drifted back towards the low lying country. They kept their heads down. With the slightest indication of direction and distance of raiders from our owntroops, I would have plastered the area with bombs and machine gun bullet. With the help of aircraft, raiders are forced to keep their heads down and cannot fight the ground troops, otherwise they could create hell on earth. I kept over the area for three hours till I was relieved by another pilot from Miranshah.

At nightfall the tribesmen ran without giving battle to the 16tn Punjabis. They know where to fight and when to stampede.

Mess life was very interesting at Miranshah. By October 1937, 'A' flight No. 1 Squadron I. A. F. and a flight of No. 5 Squadron Rawalpindi ramained at Miranshah. Revelle was sounded by trumpeters of Tochi Scouts about an hour before sunrise. It was getting very chilly. Habeeb and I sometimes went to watch camel caravans coming down the Tochi pass from Afghanistan. Some very pretty women came down the pass with those caravans. It gave us a little recreation from the bloody battle of Waziristan. Pathan tribes are very fussy about women. In 1933 an officer was shot, taking a photograph of a few pretty women walking with a camel caravan.

Habeeb and I soon realised that a glad look from a pretty Pathan damsel would only invite a bullet from a jealous lover who invariably is in the main body of the Caravan. We decided that it was more comfortable to look at pretty faces, bosoms, and torso, in the illustrated weekly of India, Tatler, Graphic and London news. Dirty picture postcards were unknown in this wild part of the world. Sorties were put upon the daily operations board. Stand by pilots had to remain in uniform till sunset. After the operational sorties, we changed into white shirts and shorts and played Tennis in the mess. It was such good fun! After a few sets of Tennis, hot water was always available for bath. After changing into tunics and trousers, the ante room with its radiogram and current periodicals and illustrated papers from London and Delhi, provided a great entertainment. The mess was stocked up with drinks and wines of all tastes and categories. Englishmen, generaly drank the most. Many Indian officers never touched wine etc. Air Force life is always a blessing in the sense that even in the front line of warfare; officers mess provides as many amenities and pleasures as at Old Sarum or Peshawar. One month's trekking with the army in Waziristan showed; what an awful life a man can have in a trench or a foxhole; in heavy wintery rains with ground full of bugs and lice etc. In the Air force, if death comes at all; it is very quick and painless. But the amenities of life are always there in your daily routine of operations. I was never trained as an Army Officer. Had I the training of an infantier or a Cavaliro; I probably would have looked at life from a different angle.

On 12th October 1937 I received orders to pick up Major Homan, a British officer at Razmak and drop him at D.I.K. on making enquiries from Razmak, by landline telephone, I was informed that there was a fairly strong East to West wind at Razmak aerodrome. Razmak was a deadly aerodrome. There was a very steep slope from South to North. The slope was so terrific from South to North that at the Northern end of S-N runway which was approximately 1000 yards long; one could not see the roof tops of the Brigade mess and the entire cantonment. Landing was to be effected invariably from South to North and take off down the slope from North to South. Approach had to be made in a straight line as high wireless

poles existed slightly to the left of the aerodrome boundry. An emergency strip also existed from East to West but no one had landed on this very short landing strip.

As the wind was across the main runway, and the strength was about 15 M.P.H. I went to Philip and informed him that there was a fairly strong cross wind. Biplanes of those days like Wapitis were effected a lot by strong cross winds. One had to be very careful in avoiding touching a wing tip on the ground as bombs without pins were carried on a steel rack just underearth the lower planes. These aircraft were not fitted with wheel brakes and it used to be terribly difficult to avoid a swing at low speeds, particularly after landing. This was one of the vices of a Westland Wapiti; otherwise she was a darling. And then Razmak aerodrome was situated at a height of 7,000 ft. above sea level. Surface was solid rock and one could not afford a bad landing or take off. Razmak was considered to be a death trap for aeroplanes. Most experienced pilots shuddered at the thought of landing at Razmak, with bombs on.

Philip asked me to contact Don Anderson an Australian Pilot in No. 20 Squadron, who had gone down to Razmak only a few days ago. Don Anderson had won D.F.C. in Mohmand Operations of 1935. An intrepid aviator, Don had bombed, Straffed and then rear machine gunned a big mountain, cave situated at a height. A party of three hundred armed tribesmen were hiding in the cave. His bombing and straffing action was so perfect that the entire lot ran out of the cave for fear of its collapse due to bombing. These men ran straight into a company of 5/10th Baluch regiment who destroyed them mercilessly with their ground Vickers machine guns MKI. The same party of tribesmen had killed a British Political Officer, the same morning when he was told not to go towards the tribesmen. This was a great tragedy of Mohmand Operations 1935. This man was a brilliant young British Political Officer. His wife and a young child were in Peshawar. He was told by the Brigade Commander, if I remember correctly, it was Brigadier Auchinleck who was stopping this officer from going over to the tribesmen on the other side of the mountains, for parleys. "I know my Pathan tribesmen better" said he and marched off across the No man's land. At this time

there was heated up firing going on between the Baluch and Punjab regiments and the Mohmand tribes. He wore a native dress like a Pathan. In the rapid firing and exchange of fire, machine gun posts saw this man through binoculars. A tribal bullet hit him and he fell down. He never rose again. Our machine gun posts said that it was a tribal bullet that killed this British Political officer, while the tribesmen sent messages that it was the Indian infantry machine guns that killed him thinking to be a Pathan in tribal dress; a pugree or turban. He was a very capable Political officer. Fighting flared up on the spot. F/O Don Anderson arrived in a Wapiti. After reading ground signals, Don proceeded with bombing and straffing of a big cave located on the side of a steep hill. Indian army advanced. Dead political officer had to be picked up for a military funeral. Tribesmen never leave their dead behind on the battle ground. The Indian army also always retrieved their dead. A determined gallant advance had to be made. As our troops advanced, Don's bombing and machine gunning from low altitudes dislodged a whole party of three hundred armed tribesmen from the mouth of the cave. Our machine guns claimed at least a fifty. Brigadier Auchinleck recommended F/O Don Anderson for D.F.C. which was duly approved by the A.H.Q.

All D.F.C's are real bravemen but they are stupid aviators as far as the scientific technique of flying goes. On this day, Don laughed and told me "It is perfectly O.K. old boy-landing along the East to West strip is a piece of cake. Come low and sit down. All is well". Silly man forgot to tell me that there was a blooming great telephone wire stretched across the aerodrome boundary at the western end. He must have landed from East to West and never saw the telephone line on the western side. When I came over Razmak Aerodrome I found a strong cross wind and landed from the Western side. How I missed those telephone lines, I do not know!'. It was lucky! I was a little high on the boundary. With bombs on board, there is hell to pay if you hit telephone or telegraph lines.

Major Homan was waiting in a black staff car. He was really worried to see me miss the telephone lines which I never saw. Our engineers are also damn fools.

What is the necessity of installing telephone, telegraph and wireless masts on the boundary of an airfield? After landing, Major Homan, his driver and a Pathan Chowkidar of the airfield helped me in turning the aircraft round. Wapitis were not fitted with wheel brakes. A few men had to pull on a wing tip when pilot opened up the engine slightly in order to turn the aircraft round. Major Homan got in the back seat along with his bed roll and a suite case. Four bags of mail were also placed in the rear cockpit. "We have this military mail to be dropped on Razcol operating in the vicinity of Ladha camp" said Homan.

After take off we reached over Ladha camp and then a valley where Razcol were operating. Troops were sprinkled over a very large area. I fired a green vary light and came down to about five hundred feet over the valley. Troops were busy in consolidating their position. I fired a second green vary light and floated around with minimum power to look around for ground strips. There was a mild dust storm in the valley. My aircraft bumped up and down very badly. I felt very bad for Major Homan who was standing up in the back seat holding a large mail bag in both arms. I got so browned off in floating around at minimum power and being kicked around by the dust storm that after locating a party of troops with a sufficient number of mules at their disposal; I looked back at Major Homan and shouted "Fling it out" Major Homan flung it like a bag of potatos is flung out of a goods train. I waved my hand again and Major Homan commenced dishing out the mail like post Master General, Govt. of India New Delhi. All the four bags were dropped in two seconds.

After this I put the throttle to full power and commenced climbing over a few high hills towards Jandola and Tank. I made a gesture to Major Homan to sit down and rest as I climbed out of the dust storm. After Jandola and Tank, the weather was really cool and calm.

The same evening, there was a rocket sent by Commander Razcol to Fort Miranshah complaining that a young pilot dropped mail almost in the front line. Two troops were killed in trying to retrieve mail. It was their fault in not displaying ground strips promptly.

Tank cantument is a green little village at the foot hills of Waziristan. I flew at a low altitude of about two thousands feet between Tank and D.I.K. which was my home town. Over my home town, everything looked nice and sweet. A line of green trees skirts the town of D.I.K. Sun was fairly low over the western horizon. I carried out a circuit over the old cavalry ground which has been converted into a landing ground. Down below, along the Eastern side of the landing ground, the mighty Indus lay in its eternal grandeur. I checked the wind indicator sock and then made a landing from the western side. On touch down a Khaki coloured army staff car drove down to the aircraft. I kept the engine running as switching off in those days meant difficulty in restarting. A Bristol 8 F. P. engine was very defficult to start when hot. Self starters were not fited to aircraft engines of those days. Propellor had to be moved with the help of bag and rope. Bag was fitted to the tip of propellor and the attached rope was pulled by three men, trying to run away from the propellor as it started. On the word "Are you ready-go"- three men pulled the propellor and at the same time, the pilot twirled the handle of a small hand starting magneto. If all was well, and with a little help from God, the engine would start with a loud report and a cloud of smoke through the twin exhaust. Otherwise the engine merely back fired; threw the bag and rope upwards in the air, as the three men fell on their bottom with terrific laughter. This procedure would repeat itself several times till the poor pilot came down with his parachute, helmet and goggles and started caressing the engine and the aircraft with words of love and affection. "Come on sally-now-yield."

In order to avoid trouble I kept the engine ticking over. I was short of time. I looked below the cockpit. Major Homan climbed up towards my cockpit and extended his right hand for a hand shake. I left the control column and gave a hearty hand shake to Major Homan. I taxied the aircraft to the western corner of the landing ground and took off. Before take off I could still see Major Homan waving out from his staff car. In those days there was a terrific comradeship between officers of the defence services in the British commonwealth.

After take off I commenced to climb. On passing

over Tank I had already gained an altitude of 6,000 feet. When I reached above Sararogha, I was at a comfortable altitude of 8,000 feet. I looked down below on the village situated on top of a hill. This was where Khonia Khel the notorious outlaw lived. The sun was setting behind the peak of Pre Ghul. Peaks of Razmak which I had nicknamed, the seven sisters were covered in crimson rays. Deep valleys were being covered in darkness when the mountain tops where gradually changing colours from crimson to purple and red. When I crossed the Shaktu and Khaisora rivers, darkness was increasing. Over the Tochi Valley, I checked my petrol gauge and time. If I did not land in ten minutes, they would have had to bring out goose neck flare path for me. Eventually that beloved home of all military aviators, Miranshah, appeared over the horizon. I throttled back over Damdil camp and glided in for a landing at Miranshah Aerodrome. In those days it was only a T shaped landing area with no pucca runways etc. I found Philip and Mukerjee, walking up and down the side of the aerodrome. A flight commander of those days was an exceedingly hard working and concientious type of a person.

By November 1937 the tempo of tribal warfare appeared to be decreasing. It generally worked out that way. In winter, food is scarce, and there is plenty of frost out in the open during nightfall. Tribesmen like warfare during summer months. When the cold weather comes and traces of snow appear on the high ranges of Waziristan; the tribesmen prefer to drive their cattle into caves for shelter against excessive cold. Their own inter tribal blood fueds also come to an end. A major warfare against the British was invariably dropped till snow began to melt above Razmak Narai, and Pre Ghal began to undo its white robe from the lower altitudes.

Tori Khel and Madda Khel wazirs, Mahzuds of Shaktu valley and Bhittannis of Rod Algad were gradually preparing for the winter. The Indian army was also giving up some of the very high piquets near Asman Manza and Ladha camp. Just above Razzani camp the Gurkhas still kept their flag flying on a small fort situated on the high peak at ten thousand feet. Smoke from this piquet could be seen miles away, by pilots out on dawn sorties or returning back from Wana or Jandola after a

day's tiresome task of providing close support, to the army. Garriom Camp was also getting thinner. Major portion of the garrison had withdrawn to the bigger cantonment at Razmak. Similarly Damdil, Dossali, and Biche Kashkai which were the pioneer garrisons in the war of Waziristan, were decreasing in strength.

Early morning and crack of dawn sorties used to be bitterly cold. We all used sydcoats and fur boats till 10 A. M. One fine morning I had my sydcoat on and fur boats and was walking up and down the side of T shaped aerodrome. I felt quite cold. Early morning rays of the sun had just beautifully illuminated the dome shaped peak towards Razzani. Miles away to the right; the seven sisters had just obtained a thin covering of first light snowfall. A very light breeze was blowing down the Tochi valley from the high peaks of Afghanistan. It was almost biting my ears and face. I put the high collar of the sydcoat almost upto the tip of my nose. It was so comforting. My arms swung from side to side. I joyfully hit my sydcoat, across the body, with the two hands.

British Flight Sergeaat Hickey was coming towards me. "Would you care to test a new engine, Sir- just Installed in Wapiti K1304" "That is a good idea, I am only marking time as a standby pilot for any call till 10 A.M. I shall be too glad" I replied. I walked upto K1304. Naik Ram Singh was jumping up and down in an effort to keep warm. A few other airmen were putting chocks in front of the wheels. I asked Ram Singh "Would you care to see the first snowfall over Razmak". Ram Singh replied with his usual laughter "Yes-Sir" I picked up my helmet and goggles and donned the parachute. It was a beautiful engine as it started on the first kick. After take-off, I turned steeply over the Tochi river, waved to a Tochi piquet perched on the hill and then headed towards the seven sisters. At an altitude of eight thousand feet, I caught the first glimpse of the snow covered reverse slope of the seven sisters. The sight was so magnificent that I was attracted towards it. I pointed it to Naik Ram Singh who nodded in appreciation. I was attracted to go near and fly low over the seven sisters. The beauty of the snow covered peaks made me completely forget that I was the standby pilot and should have remained at the aerodrome. After all; engine test should

never have taken more than ten minutes at the most. Here Ram Singh and I were trying to spot Markhor on the snow covered reverse slopes of the seven sisters. My allocated war plane J9755 stood bombed up with sixteen, eight pounders and about a thousand rounds of front and rear machine gun ammunition. Army wireless station kept alert in case of any W/T message from Razmak, Wana Jandola or Bannu.

In the meantime, Habeeb, Aspee, Mukerjee, Narander, and Majumdar were roaring with laughter as Flight Sergeant Hickey brought the flight Commander Philip Haynes to the aerodrome. They all pointed to a speck on the snow covered western horizon of Razmak hills. Then there was a roar of laughter alround "There is the standby pilot carrying out an engine test for five minutes. He must have spotted a few markhors by now on the snow covered slopes". Once again there was loud laughter. A party of airmen also looked up at a small object high up above the white peaks to the west, and laughed. Everyone enjoyed the fun.

When I landed, flight Sergeant Hickey met me. "Flight Commander would like to see you-Sir-for a minute in his office". This was not such good fun. I walked into the office of the Flight Commander and saluted with the helmet hanging round my neck. "Where did you go? You are a standby pilot for any emergency call from any Brigade or Divisional Headquarters. Engine test is for five minutes. Not for thirty" Said the Flight Commander. When I came out of the office; Habeeb, Aspee and Majumdar stood roaring with laughter at a little distance. Come on-Let us go and have some breakfast. "Did you spot any Markhors in the snow"? Then we all laughed aloud and walked towards the mess. A British flight Commander's raspherry used to be very gentle those days.

With the easing up of pressure, by middle of November 1937, No. 20 A.C. Squadron R.A.F. withdrew to Peshawar. A flight of No. 5 Squadron R.A.F. Rawalpindi and 'A' flight No. 1 Squadron Indian Air Force remained at Miranshah. Razmaak and Bannu Brigades were also withdrawing from the forward areas in the beds of the river Shaktu and Khaisora back to their Permanent Cantonments. Orders had been received for Brigadier Maynard to hand over charge of Bannu

Brigade to someone else. He had reached the age of fifty five, and was placed on the retired list. Brigadier Maynard was one of the ablest Brigade Commanders that I have ever met or heard of. In tribal operations he was a real genius. He always led his own brigade on foot and was always in the thickest of battles. Probably the only other capable Commander who knew more about tribal warfare was Brigadier Auchinleck of the Mohmand operations fame of 1935.

It is not known as to who was responsible for the issue of a most tactless order that Bannu Brigade was to move down the Shaktu river valley in full pomp and glory; with regimental flags unfurled, And with bugles and drums. Tribesmen hate blowing of bugles and regimental drums through their territory at the close of hostilities as it shows undue pomp and glory attributed to a false victory which in fact had not been achieved. Bannu brigade marched down the Shaktu at about 2 P. M. They were scheduled to pass the narrow Tangi or gorge where the Shaktu comes out into the plains of Bannu district. With the first word of Command 'Brigade-quick march' banners were unfurled and the regimental brass bands struck some lovely march tunes. Bannu brigade at this time consisted of 6/13 Frontier Force, 1/10th Baluch, and a battalion of 11th Sikhs with other detachments of signals, supply corps, Mule transport, Mountain artillery etc. ect. Rifles and Buoynets of the brigade shone in the bright sunshine. Toughened up troops kept a very steady pace with their regimental bands. Dry portion of the bed of the Shaktu river was being followed. On both sides of the steep hill slopes, machine gun piquets from Razmak brigade and near by garrisons provided the covering. As Bannu brigade came to a green portion of the valley with four villages situated on the banks of the river, black veiled women watched the triumphant Jawans of the Indian army, joyfully looking at the conquered valley. The village damsels looking at the Jawans of the Indian army annoyed the tribesmen even further.

I was detailed for a sortie at 4 P. M. Bombs and machine guns were always there on the faithful Wapiti but this time I got an oblique camera fitted up also. News of the triumpahnt march of Bannu brigade was so good that I had promised everyone a unique photograph of

Bannu Brigade carryingout victory march through the Shaktu Tangi. Everyone had pinned hope on me in producing a squadron photogaph for Xmas greetings and a happy new year (1938), showing the whole of triumphant Bannu Brigade preceded by unfurled regimental colours and massed brass bands.

I took off from Miranshah at 3.40 P.M. and headed straight for the Shaktu. When I arrived over the area at a proper reconnaissance height, I looked alround but found no troops. I was still wondering and woffling around when my airgunner touched me on the back and pointed towards Majumdar who had come up in close formation on my left wing tip. Majum waved his hands above his head and pointed frantically downwards. "Hells bells- there is a fight down below". Those days there was no radio contact with each other. Pilots merely made gestures at each other and made themselves understood. In a second Majum went into a steep dive. His both machine guns firing at the tribesmen under cover, I followed him to survey the situation. Ground signs had to be seen and read in order to find out what was happening. I have never seen so many signs in my life as I saw on that day. Probably there was a hand to hand fight with daggers and buyonets. I came lower and lower in order to get a direction of friend and foe. Where on earth was my photographic objective the triumphant Bannu Brigade? They were caught with their bugles & drums & literally with their pants down.

Majumdar's burst of front gun fire and the last bomb had indicated a good line of initial attack to me. I watched him closely as he pulled out of his attack. Then I dived and opened up with a good burst of machine gun fire. Vicker-bomb-Lewis was the orthodox method of attacking tribesmen interlocked in combat with our troops. They definitely have the overall advantage of knowing the lay out of tbe country. Element of surprise and mobility which is lost in orthodox type of warfare followed by regular troops, is exploited fully by the tribesmen.

In this case nearly a full lashkar of about three thousands wazirs and Mahsuds had jumped on Bannu brigade when the poor devils were engaged in a ceremonial march down the Shaktu river bed. The tribal lashkar held an exceedingly good position on top of Tangi where the river Shaktu emerged into the plains of Bannu. The

tribesmen must have been exceedingly clever in creeping up to almost the same position as a few of our own machine gun piquets belonging to Razmak brigade.

After pulling out of the first attack, I quickly looked round. My word!—There were ground signals all over the place. Apparently the fighting was spread over a large area. I gained height. Made the nose and tail pistols of the bombs, live, and selected the lever for one at a time. After gaining sufficient height I dived again in the direction of the enemy and released a twelve pounder anti personnel bomb. As I got nearer to the ground, I gave a good burst of front machine gun fire; climbed and turned to the left and asked my air gunner to give a good burst of Lewis gun fire. I do not remember who was with me on that dey; A.C. Wali Mohd., Kartar Singh, Gulam Ali, or Mohd. Salim But he was really quick on the up take and was plastering the ememy's indicated position with bullets. I repeated my attacks on different positions, several times. It was winter time and sun set quite early in the evening. At about sunset when I was quite tired, and it was time to return home before it became very dark, I followed the river Shaktu and then cut across the Khaisora and Tochi in order to drop a message on Mirali Cantonment which was supposed to be coordinating the withdrawal of Bannu Brigade. I wrote down the following message in my own handwriting and dropped it in a coloured cloth bag with a streamer.

"Bannu brigade is very badly held up in the norrow gorge of Shaktu river from pin points——to——. By the look of things losses must be quite heavy on both sides. By nightfall if the conflict still goes on, there will be very heavy casualities on both sides, Have dropped sixteen bombs and expended one thousands round of front and rear machine gun ammunition. Previous sortie also expended all its bomb load and machine gun ammunition. Miranshah will be interested to hear more news immeditely, in order that special close support sorties are sent before dawn.

Sd/-
F/O A. B. Awan I.A.F."
——November 1937."

After dropping the message at Mirali Cantonment I turned right, skimmed over the small foothill situated on the eastern side of the aerodrome and landed at Miranshah. News of the fight was being relayed by the Royal Corps of Signals from the front line to Divisional Headquarters Razmak. These messages were repeated for information to Fort Commander Miranshah. Although the war in Waziristan was spread out over the period of a few years i.e. from March 1937 to August 1947. entailing at least a few thousand men killed on both sides and tremendous loss of cattle, property and equipmant; but on the score of a single day's battle; thirty casualties on our side out of which six died on the battlefield and probably the same number on the enemy side; was not a bad score for one single day.

I reported to the army intelligence liason officer who took down my report with great interest. I was the last sortie that day, and the fury of battle was at its height about sunset. Dead and wounded had to be retrieved from the battle ground. For this purpose determined counter attack were carried out from both sides, before dark.

I came and had a hot bath and changed into a warm tunic and trousers. I shared the room with Habeeb, who was at that time writing a love letter to his fiancee. Habeeb looked at me and laughed. As he turned round in his chair, his face was brightly illuminated by an electric table lamp. In his laughter he paused. "So the fighting was tough today, Zaidy. You think it will continue tomorrow-because I am the dawn sortie tomorrow. Up with the lark! Rise and shine my lucky boys". And then he went into peels of laughter "Yes Bulbul" I replied "The fighting was really tough today. About a dozen times I had to go low down for the bomb and the front gun. The place was full of tribesmen. Tribesmen are crack shots and then with a foreign rifle and bullet. After landing, the first thing I chocked up was my overall and all parts of my anatomy, to find out whether the tribesmen got anything. I am glad to say that everything was in tact" Then the two of us joined in a hearty laugh.

We walked into the mess together. Squadron Leader Hamblin and Philip were having a glass of whisky together. We wished them 'good evening', and sat down

for a chat on the day's operations. Squadron leader Hamblin was very keen to improve the situation at dawn next day by sending four aircraft, two from 5 Squadron R.A.F., and two from No. 1 Squadron I.A.F.

Habeeb and I looked at a few magazines before going in for dinner. A delicious steak and onions was served and we ate with great appetite.

Tribesmen are clever fighters. For centuries, as far back as the rule of Asoka, and Chandragupta, Kings of India; and during the invasion of Alexander the Great, tribesmen have been masters of hit and run tactics. They know their inferiority of weapons and therefore never fight a holding down battle. They withdraw under cover of a thick forest, or deep nullahs and ravines. Steep slopes full of big rocks and boulders give them excellent protection against aircraft and tanks. The worst of battles is over within six to twelve hours. The enemy withdraws with the intention of choosing some other ground and another day. Like this the battle goes on spread over a period of a few years. Waziristan war of 1937 was carried on till 14th August 1947 when partition took place in the Government of India. After 1947, although no tribesman has raised a rifle against any Pakistani citizen; yet Fakir of Ipi has never surrendered. Only a fortnight ago as I am writing these lines, news came in that notorious tribal outlaw Mehar Dil who was the C-in-C of Fakir of Ipi's tribal hordes, surrendered himself personally to the Deputy Commissioner of Bannu on 4th November 1954. He signed a pledge of good will and friendship with the Government of Pakistan. Fakir of Ipi died only recently as I am getting this book published in 1962.

That evening immediately after sunset, tribal hordes withdrew their blockade of the mouth of Shaktu Tangi, after having retrieved their dead and wounded. Dawn sorties revealed that all was well. Not a shot was fired. Bannu brigade formed up again in the dry portion of the bed of river Shaktu. But this time there was no unfurling of regimental colours and the triumphant music of a brass band. Regimental drums had several holes. So there was no point in beating these as a very poor type of music would have come out. The drum major with his twirling moustache spent the bitterly cold night in a fox hole holding on to a rifle and buoynet. His twirled up

moustache was at half mast level now. Ancient warriors have always said "It is not wise to crow over a fallen enemy". After that no brigade ever went through the Shaktu and Khaisora valleys with unfurled colours, bugles and drums and massed regimental brass bands.

Additional reinforcements were sent in from nearby garrisons. More troops were alerted in Razmak, Mirali and Bannu Cantonments. The air force increased their sorties. Definite orders were given to go low and put up an all out effort to retrieve Bannu brigade. But before retrieving Bannu Brigade, the tribal hordes had completely withdrawn and disappeared over the horizon.

In the history of tribal warfare, I wonder if the army will ever again make an attempt at a ceremonial march. with drums, bugles and banners, through the heart of the tribal territory and carry out flag wagging in front of their women when the tribal warriors are engaged in ploughing their fields or grazing their sheep, goats and camels.

When brigadier Maynard heard of this outrage; he was furious. He was at Razmak at the time when a farewell was being arranged in his honour. He had received orders to proceed to U.K. in order to be placed on the retired list of distinguished British soldiers. He was given an honorary higher rank and made A.D.C. to King George VI.

Before Brig. Maynard left Razmak he made a last request to be flown in an aeroplane. I think, Squadron Leader Hamblin, Philip Haynes or F/O Majumdar went down to Razmak in a Wapiti and gave him a joy ride over a portion of Shaktu and Khaisora valleys, Asman Manza and Wana where he had won victories against the tribal hordes.

Our mess life during the month of November was most enjoyable There were at least half a dozen pilots of 5 Squadron R.A.F. and about the same number of No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. stationed at Miranshah. We all got at least one or two sorties in everyday. There were no major battles after that of the Shaktu Tangi. An occasional case of sniping a road convoy or a far off piquet happened, but there was nothing serious.

One day I was told to provide close support to a detachment of South Waziristan Scouts from Wana who

were to surround a village and capture a lieutenant of the Fakir of Ipi. When I reached over this village I found that two companies of South Waziristan Scouts under a few British officers had laid a seige round this village. Proceedings were really very laborious. One hour passed and then the second hour was almost dragging on but nothing was happening. I went round and round but nothing was happening. I got so bored. In order to keep myself amused I chased a herd of camel down a hill into a nullah. The sight was quite amusing. The camel is such a stupid animal that with the noise of a low flying and swooping aircraft it will run upto a certain distance but then once it decides to stand still in a nullah bed; it will merely turn round its longneck and look at an aeroplane without moving an inch. Stricken with fright it may begin to urinate but it will not run. Having no other amusement left I turned to the village once again to see what progress had been made in the capture of Fakir of Ipi's lieutenant Sher Ali. I had hardly waited for ten minutes over the house of Sher Ali when from a low altitude I saw two tribesmen runing hell for leather from amud house and a tower towards an algad. It created an Immediate impression on my brain that probably Sher Ali and an accomplice had broken away from the siege and were running hell for leather towards the hills. I always kept my machine guns in the loaded position and the gun synchronizing gear constantinesco fully warmed up by pulling the reservoir handle up and expelling all the air out of the system by pressing the triggers. I loaded both machine guns. Those days the loading handle used to be situated outside the cockpit. I put the aircraft in a dive and put the ring and bead sight on to the two running tribesmen. At a height of three hundred feet from the ground, I pressed the trigger. There was a loud report as the twin front machine guns barked. There was a big burst on the ground where the two men were running. I saw one of them roll into a bush and a semi cave near the hillside, A steep hill was in front of me, I climbed up and came in for a second attack. In the meantime an idea flashed across my brain "Supposing this man was not Sher Ali and a follower" Hells bells! It was a court martial offence, to kill a tribesman just for the sake of killing unless it is proved beyond doubt that the man was definitely a hostile. I waited and stood clear.

At this time a detachment of South Waziristan Scouts holding Tiarza post; a small fort built on top of a hill on the reverse slopes of Wana, was being commanded by Lieutenant Pelly, an Irish man. Pelly was with me and Mukerjee in the 1st term at the R.A.F. College Cranwell in 1930. Poor boy was not very good at flying and was sent to the Royal Military College Sandhurst in February 1931. In August 1931 I had driven to Sandhurst on my Norton Motorcycle to see some of the cadet friends like Raza, Hayauddin and Raja Allahdad. I was very pleased to bump into Pelly on the lawns of Royal Military College Sandhurst.

I had no Idea that one day Pelly and I would be chasing Sher Ali the tribal outlaw, in the wild mountains of Waziristan. When I returned to Miranshah I saw Pelly's W/T message "Close support pilot should have refrained from opening fire on two tribesmen running In a nullah. Ground signals must be watched. We are surrounded by hundreds of thousands of tribesmen. Opening fire at random merely infuriates the tribesmen. At Tiarza post we are only fifty south waziristan Scouts holding a lonely small fort. We will be butchered by the tribal hordes". After that, no pilot opened fire on a tribesman on suspicion. In fact the golden rule of tribal warfare and seasoned army cooperation pilots was that if you saw a tribesman from the air, rest assured that he was no enemy.

After three months in Waziristan we longed to see pretty women. The only women we saw were those in the illustrated weekly of India and other leading English illustrated papers like. Tatler, London news, Sphere etc. A strange sexual desire for women was almost gripping all of us. The first one to go down was our British Flight Sergeant Hickey. A pretty girl had followed him all the way from England. He took leave. we flew him down to Peshawar. That was the end of our Flight Sergeant, never to return back to the wilds of Waziristan. He was married in a beautiful English church in peshawar. A lucky woman married him. Hickey was a good worker. Not a day more than nine months passed when Hickey was seen pushing a pram along the Mall road. Philip had quite a number of girl friends in Peshawar. Aspee had a Pretty dame in Bombay. Bulbul kept on showing me

pictures of his girl friend. "Wait brother till I get to Lahore-This Xmas" he kept on telling me.

Mukerjee occasionally said "Roll on December-those lovely lights on the banks of the Hoogly. That swing music at Farpos and those beautiful Bengal belles". Aspee kept on persuading me to go to Bombay. "Zaidy-one evening at the Taj Mahal and you will forget the whole of your blooming North west Frontier. We can ask some girl friends to juhu beach. Boy-what fun with those twinkling stars and the sighing Palm groves". I also received a letter from a gril friend in D.I.K. "Darling duck, it is a great pity that you flew down to your home town but had no time to see me". From a sex point of view, I was convinced that if a man lived in fort Miranshah for a period of two years, he would turn in to a cannibal and would eat up a pretty woman if he saw one.

One month later, Lieutant Pelly my Irish friend and Commander of the South Waziristan post at Tiarza was flown to Peshawar for ten day's casual leave. After leaving Ireland and beautiful Tipperary, Pelly remained marooned at Tiarza post and Wana for one year. Now at the Officers Club at Peshawar, Pelly looked at every good looking woman like a country yokel let loose in London. Late that evening when Pelly asked a young good looking woman for a dance, he was stuck to her for hours. Mukerjee came laughing up to me "Remember Pelly at Cranwell. The poor fellow is sex starved and lost in the officers club Peshawar. See what Tiarza post can do over a period of one year." Like Hickey, Pelly was married to an English girl in Peshawar. Another good man gone West and never to return to the mountains of Waziristan.

With the decrese of night temperatures, the tempo of war in Waziristan was also decreasing. Bhitannis in the Rod Alged area had almost ceased all hostilities. The leader of Bhitanni religious movement, Din, Fakir, had not delivered a fiery speach after Friday prayers for over a month. Two R.A.F. Wapiti bomber squadrons from Kohat had played up hell with their crops during September and October 1937. A very novel method of throwing ignited petrol tins from the air was used. I personally never had the experience of dropping large petrol tins which were set on fire by an incendiary bomb as the

tinfell through the air after release from a universal type of bomb carrier fixed under the main planes of a Wapiti. The incendiary bomb set the petrol tin on fire on impact with the ground or by means of a time fuse as the tin of petrol was hurled through the air.

Bhitannis are generally not such a ferocious tribe as the Wazirs, Mahsuds, Afridis or Mohmands but in a religious war even the most docile of tribes get ferocious. Bhitannis had joined up with other brother tribes from the time of the flare up of tribal war from April 1937. They did not send a well organised lashkar at any time, but had carried out many decoities on the road and rail track between Bannu, Gul Imam and Tank. They had ambushed a few army road convoys bringing supplies from D. I. K., via Tank to Jandola, Kot Kai and Manzai and Sararogha.

It was decided to punish the Bhitanis of Rod Algad after repeated warnings and requests in the form of white leaflets were dropped on the whole area occupied by them. These warnings and requests bore no fruit. Din Fakir preached louder and louder in his Friday sermons. English rule was a regime of the Satan. Enchroachment on the tribal territory was an act of violance against Islam. Eventually when the dacoities, loot and plunder of the settled districts of India, became intolerable, it was decided to drop red leaflets from the air and then commence burning of their ripe crops by throwing down ignited petrol and keronsine tins from the air.

All tribesmen hate the burning of ripe crops or killing of cattle. After concurrence of the Governor of N.W.F.P., Sir George Cunningham; C-in-C India ordered proscription of the Bhitannie area around the river Rod Algad. The army was fully occupied with the Wazirs and Mahsuds numbering at least half a million. So it was decided to leave the punishment for the Bhittannis, in the hands of two R.A.F. Wapiti Squadrons from Kohat. Red leaflets were dropped over the entire area. At the termination of twenty four hours as intimated in the red leaflets and after it was established without a shadow of doubt that the Bhittanis had not sent in their hostages or a promise of good behavious; two R.A.F. Squadrons arrived over the proscribed area and commenced to unload ignited tins of kerosine and petrol above the ripe crops. In a light or strong wind, ripe crops burn very well indeed.

Tin after tin came hurtling through the air. Several fires were set up which spread with success. Unfortunately tribal area is not very fertile and due to the stony nature of the soil there is no continuity in the area under crops. wide gaps exist between patches of ripe crop. When the fire reaches those gaps it automatically dies out. This punishment was repeated after every four days. Tribesmen have a tremendous sense of humour. Every tin that failed to ignite, and crashed in a field with a terrific spilling of kerosene and petrol, produced roars of laughter from hundreds of tribesmen and women gathered on the steep slopes in front of caves which were being used as shelter. We were spending more on kerosine and petrol dropped in tins, which did not ignite than the damage done to dispersed crops. After three weeks of this burning effort which produced loud applause from the tribesmen as is witnessed on a football ground, we gave up the burning of crops and adopted shooting up of cattle. This was very effective. One feels sorry for the poor sheep and goats and the tall stupid camel which does not drop till hit broadside with a full burst of machine gun fire. This stopped the laughter from the tribesmen. There were army intelligence reports that the tribesmen no longer collected in large numbers in front of the mouths of caves and took on bets on every tin dropped from the air weather it would ignite or not. Many a wager was lost and won. many a laughter echoed through the valley of Rod Algad. But when the aircraft claimed fifty sheep, twenty goat and about a dozen camel on the first day of new technique of punishment, the Bhitannis thought that the British were losing their sense of humour.

After the first day of the new technique of punishment I was sent to carry out reconnaissance over the area of Rod Algad where R.A.F. Kohat had played up hell on the previous day. I was amazed. How wily a tribesman is. Cattle had disappeared completely from the proscribed area. Over night all cattle were removed into caves and to other areas not proscribed. There was not a man or beast. Even the wild ravens had fled from the fury of proscription.

This area was very fertile and contained the golden crop. Tribesmen cut the crop at night and slept in caves outside the proscribed area during daytime. Within ten

days the entire crop was removed. Now the fields were ready for irrigation. There had been the first early winter rainfall on the mountains. Rod Algad was flowing full to the brim. Fields had to be irrigated for the winter ploughing and sowing of crops. Within two months from the proscription of Rod Algad area, Din Fakir, leader of the Bhittanis tribe sent hostages, two thousand rifles and a fine of rupees twenty thousand to the British Political Resident at Razmak. Bhitannis were now definitely out of conflict for at least six months till another religious lecture was given after Friday prayers. Two squadrons of the Royal Air Force at Kohat achieved what a division of the army could not have achieved in one year. Good show-R.A.F. Kohat! We the poor army cooperation types with recconnaissance pads, wireess messages, cameras and message bags were destined to continue trotting up and down the valleys of Waziristan for years to come, without decisive battle. Bomber squadrons always achieve much more in an independent task than army cooperation squadrons; but one thing is quite clear. Army cooperation spuadrons are the eyes of the army. Without our reconnaissance and close support with machine guns and bombs, no army division could have survived over a long period. Our bullets and bombs hit the tribesmen on steep slopes, deep ravines, gorges and mountain peaks which were inaccessible to our ground troops. In every battle in the Waziristan war of 1937-1947, a solitary army cooperation pilot turned the scale whenever our troops got interlocked with the tribesmen in a hand to hand battle. Bomber squadrons are effective over large targets and proscribed areas. But where a mere four hundred yards separates thousands of tribal hordes and our troops; nothing better can deliver the goods than an army cooperation type. We are specialists at this task. Bullet has to be aimed in a certain direction in case it rikochet's towards our own troops. Every antipersonnel bomb has to be dropped in a certain line of attack, in case it is flung towards our own troops, due to a hang over. Army cooperation technique takes years to learn and to master. From the days of the school of army cooperation Old Sarum (U.K.) upto the time that an A.C. Pilot begins to get grey hair; he is learning and trying to perfect the science of army cooperation.

At Miranshah, Tennis was a very popular game in the evening. Tochi scouts had a lovely squash court. Philip and Hamblin used to go there occasionally. We preferred Tennis in our own mess compound. After the game a hot bath and change into warm clothes was most welcome. Illustrated magazines and periodicals provided a great attraction. Any picture of a cinema star in a bathing costume gave tremendous joy. At that time we were probably the only Air Force mess, in the British empire who were permitted to have art pictures and paintings with women showing beautiful white breasts. In the diffused lights of electric lanterns on a black mahagony dining table all officers used to go round the room once and have a good look at those beautiful large white breasts of western and oriental beauties of the stage and screen of 1937, before sitting down for dinner. We were almost becoming sex starved tribesmen. In fact the tribesman was very much better off. He at least had a woman of some sorts, in a cave, mud house or a watch tower. We had nothing. Only those lovelies in picture frames on the wall. I wish one of these lovelies had drifted across in flesh and blood to officers mess R.A.F. Miranshah.

One day there was laughter in the flight office. I had come back after late lunch. Mukerjee, Narender and Majumdar sat laughing in a corner of the room. When I entered the room, Habeeb burst out into loud laughter "Aspee's revs have gone up by three thousand per minute. A tribesman has shot his controls off". This amused me also and then we all laughed. I always had a soft corner for Aspee. I peeped outside and saw Aspee pacing up and down the tarmac in front of the hanger. He was smoking vigorously at the rate of two cigarettes a minute. His face looked pulled down and without colour. I went to him and said "What is the matter Aspee". Aspee's voice was very much subdued. He replied "Tribesmen have shot my controls away over Razmak Narai where I was giving close support to an army column. Just go and have a look at the aircraft". I went outside. There was a party of Indian airmen including Harjinder Singh, Mitra, Sharma, Abdul Salam aud a few others. They were closely examining the elevator control cable which had

been shot away. A tribal bullet had come along the side of the fuselage and cut the control cable in two. This provided some amusement. Then Mukerjee, Narender, Majumdar and Habeeb came outside and there was good laughter. But it was not such a goood joke to find that the tribesman was such a good shot. Minor battles went on all over Waziristan. This happened at intervals of few days. But a pitched battle like that of Shaktu Tangi did not take place. Brigadier Maynard had left for England. Bannu Brigade, the real battle winners of Waziristan had safely arrived at Bannu Cantonment and were enjoying a period of rest and recreation. By the first week of December 1937, orders had come for 'A' fiight No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. to return to Peshawar in anticipation of preparation for the armament training camp at Karachi.

With due preparation; machine guns and universal type of bomb carriers were removed and luggage racks were fixed to the under portion of lower main planes. Our men left one day earlier in a ground convoy of motor trucks escorted by the Tochi Scouts upto Kurram river and then by Kurram Malitia upto Hango and Kohat. Two sorties of No. 5 Squadron escorted our convoy past Spinwam and Thal forts after which the territory of Wazirs came to an end. After that, it was plain sailing upto Hango and Kohat.

On the morning of Departure we got up fairly early, and had early breakfast. Our blankets and bedding was rolled up and tied on the luggage carrier racks. A party of No. 5 Squadron's British airmen helped us to start up the aircraft. Philip was the first one to taxy out. followed by Mukerjee, then myself and then Aspee. Squadron Leader Hamblin, Monty Birch, Chhota King and a few other officers and men of No. 5 Squadron had assembled near the parking apron. We took off singly. Philip turned up the Tochi river. We soon caught him up. He turned about and called us to a tight diamond formation popularly called A.H. Charlie formation. We came over Miranshah fort in a fairly spectacular formation. All army units, Tochi Scouts, the air force, and the whole of Fort Miranshah waved out to us as we were told later. In fact, the tribesmen also had a soft corner for us inspite of the fact that we hit them hard on

the battle ground. But they realized that duty was duty! War was like a game of Hockey. One occasionally got hurt but without getting hurt, nothing is achieved. I, for one spoke the same language and followed the same creed and religion as the tribesmen. But never was a moment, when I did not think that the tribesmen were very naughty boys and must be punished hard otherwise there would be no law and order in the settled districts of India. In fact my poor district of D.I.K. was the worst effected by tribal marauders. Many innocent citizens lost their lives and much damage was done to property.

We flew low over fort Lockhart in an open Vic formation. When we took off singly from Miranshah, Hamblin waved out so nicely. He was a most sincere and good leader. His report to Air Head Quarters on the performance of Indian Air Force in the tribal operations of Waziristan, on 25th November 1937 actually put the Indian Air Force on the map of air forces in our country. Upto November 1937 we were considered as show boys who trotted around the blue skies, in order to satisfy the political leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohd Ali Jinnah, Mr. Pant and Doctor Moonje. But now the Air Head Quarters plotted our position on their war map on the same footing as No. 20 squadron R.A.F. No. 28 Squadron R.A.F., No. 5 Squadron R.A.F., 31 Squadron R.A.F. No. 60 Squadron R.A.F. and four more Hart and Wapiti Squadrons of the Royal Air Force stationed at Risalpur and Kohat. This was a good achievement, thanks to the efforts of the man who created No. 1 Squadron I.A.F; Flight Lieutenant Bouchier and the hard work of Philip Haynes who led us in combat for three years. Hamblin, Fair-weather, Chisman, and Basil Embry were those noble squadron commanders of Miranshah and Peshawar stations of the Royal Air Force who helped as so much. Their good reports paved the way for further success. Two years later, this help and good wishes were further augmented by Wing Commander Bussell in charge of training at Air Headquarter Simla. This help I shall describe later.

We were very sorry to leave our comrades of No. 5 Squadron at Miranshah. After reaching Peshawar we reverted back to a programme of peace time training. A daily programme of front and rear camera gun exercises,

puff shoots, Popham panel, night flying, dive bombing, low level bombing, vertical mosaic photography, long range peace time tribal reconnaissance over Afridi Tirah and Mohmand territory, cooperation with artillery brigade at Nowshera, and infantry in Kajuri plain and Landi Kotal etc. was commenced.

An army intelligence liason course had commenced in Peshawar. We flew these officers occasionally on exercises with the army. They carried their own maps and knee pads for reconnaissance reports. They were learning the element of reconnaissance very well indeed. Lieutenant Andrews and Loppy Henney were two of the instructors. These officers were exceedingly clever as far as aerial reconnaissance was concerned. Andrews won the first V.C. during the evacuation of Dankirk in 1939. Loppy was also a very good officer from Scotland. He had no time for the infantry although he was an infantier himself. He liked flying and remained with the Royal Air Force and Indian Air Force for a very long time. The intelligence liason course was progressing very well indeed. Then came Xmas 1937. Air Force mess Peshawar arranged an Xmas dinner and dance. The army officers had learnt the elements of reconnaissance so very well. Where on earth they produced so many popsies from, I do not know! Our mess was full of young dames. No. 20 Squadron had a fairly good share. They produced good Jazz music. Dinner was good. Our head Khansamah produced a most excellent Xmas pudding. As far as drinks were concerned, Air Force always did very well. Any aircraft returning back from the R.A.F. Depot Drigh Road Karachi; besides carrying the bed roll of the pilot and the airmen, slung under-neath the main planes, invariably carried a crate or two of Scotch whisky and Choicest wines imported from abroad. King's regulations did not permit the carriage of any drink bottles in an open state, on board His Majesty's aircraft; but in a crated condition these bottles were in the same category as mess stores.

The twitter of popsies continued in the mess till 3 A.M. Many a happy Xmas kiss and good wish was imparted in the dark during departure. Many a motor car was cold as ice and would not start. Helping hands and mess bearers pushed many cars for a start. The effect

of that Xmas eve and the new year's ball at the officers mess remained for days.

Early in January 1938, orders had come for Philip to return back to England. We bade him good bye at the Cantonment railway station. Good fellow Philip! he had done such a lot for us. From a gang of show boys, and a political eye wash; he brought us upto the operational standard of any British Air Force Squadron. Philip was one of the most capable army cooperation pilots that served in India since the first arrival of the R.A.F. in 1916-1918. He had tremendous amount of inttellect and flying skill. In army cooperation he had years of exparience dating back to the Mohmand Operations of 1933-35 and Waziristan operations of 1937. There was nothing that Philip could not do better than any of us inspite of the fact that Aspee was a Groves Memorial. Cup winner and all of us thought ourselves to be cat's pants as for as flying was concerned. The train puffed away. This was a goodbye to a very fine aviator, a flight commander and a friend.

Philip was succeeded by Flight Lieutenant Smith, a South African. He was no comparison with Philip. He was not an army cooperation pilot. Army cooperation flying and operations on the North West Frontier of India require years and years of tough flying. And to command a gang of tough Indian aviators you had to be first class. Smith never even gave a shadow or reflection of Philip. Still, orders were orders, and a commanding officer had to be respected at all times.

Early in January Smith asked me to lead a formation for long range tribal reconnaissance over Afridi Tirah, Snow had fallen on the mountains of Sufaid Koh range. To the right, the Hindu Kush was like a white wall and further to the right the Mohmand ranges looked beautiful in their white robes. Even the smaller hills of Khyber and the peaks of Zeru and Landukai Ghar to the left of Bara river, on the direct air route to Miranshah were covered heavily with snow.

I led a formation of three Wapitis. Smith was on my left and Narinder on my right. I followed the Bara river and skipped across a few high peaks into the heart of Afridi Tirah; the Bagh valley. Millions of

mud huts and tall watch towers were covered with snow. In the middle of the Bagh valley, there is a big mosque where all the Muslim tribesmen gather for Friday prayers. After the Friday prayers, in a central place a big cattle market thousands of sheep, goat, and camel are bought and sold for money or on a barter system. The sight is magnificent. This has been carried on since ages. On number of occasions I took vertical photographs of Bagh valley and the cattle market. The entire village appears to be littered with thousands of cattle and Human beings.

I signalled to Smith and Narendra to break off formation and mark time for a short period till I completed my reconnaissance report and a series of vertical photographs as ordered by H.Q. No. 223 Group R.A.F. Peshawar under Group Captain Bottomley, a dear old man who will always be remembered in the war of Waziristan 1937. Twice a week a Group aircraft would leave for Miranshah in the scorching heat of the midday sun in June-July and August 1937. Late in the evening when the sun set behind the Khyber peak, a solitary Wapiti would be seen gliding in from the direction of Zeru and Landukai Ghar. A tired British Group Captain would remove his helmet and goggles and get down from the cockpit. Bottomley was a first class aviator; a sound reconnaissance pilot, an able leader, and a gentleman loved by all; and particularly by the Indian officers.

After I obtained a series of vertical photographs and filled up a page or two of the reconnaissance report on my knee pad I waggled my wings furiously. Narendra came on but Smith had drifted away to a remote mountain side. I had to go up to him and waggle my wings in order to catch his attention From the Bagh vallley I set course for Parachinar and tried to do the same trick as Philip used to do in tribal reconnaissance. I clung to the side of a steep mountain side. Smith and Narendra would not play. In the end I gave up the attempt as it becomes very dangerous at times like the case when David Atcherley led a formation of four Wapitis from 28 squadron Ambala. Poor Sinclair hit the side of a steep hill and crashed. He broke his leg and was unconscious. He was brought down to British military hospital Peshawar by a party of Afridi tribesmen after a two day's trek from

the Bagh valley. Flight Lieutenant Sinclair's broken leg was tied up in a goatskin which stank.

At Parachinar the beauty of snow covered monntains was colossal. I dropped a massage at one of the Frontier Constabulary posts, perched on top of a hill. The message enquired if all was well. When going down to drop messages in the snow covered mountains I always remembered Bouchie's advice on a cold wintry morning in the Hab river manoeuvres near Karachi. "When going down to drop a message on the army, keep that little bit of engine on. Do not freeze up your engine and carburettor in a long steep glide with the throttle pulled back. When pulling up; your engine might cough or splutter. This is fatal when very low down" This was really more fatal in the deep valleys of the Safeed Koh range where you go down eight or ten thousand feet to drop a message, low down in the valley. When you pull up; your engine must be hundred percent efficient to bring you upto from where you went down, leaving your comrades behind.

From Parachinar, we followed the Kurram river from arawali up to Thal and then came up the Hango valley upto Zeru and Landukai Ghar and then cut across towards Barafort and Peshawar.

Smith was very much impressed with the system of tribal reconnaissance and how we followed the route from peak to peak rather than by compass courses. No South African is pleased with what a native can do. Smith always used to talk against the capabilities of Indians. His pretty wife was also the same but to a little less degree.

Smith remained with us till 1939. He was always full of praise for the South Africans and the whites but never admired a native Indian for doing anything well. He was nowhere as compared to Philip or Bouchie who were pure Britishers.

There is a very interesting story about Smith who was promoted to the rank af a Squadron Leader in March 1938 when No. 1 Squadron was assembling at Ambala for the first time for combining 'A' flight from Peshawar, 'B' flight from Drigh Road Karachi and formation of 'C' flight at Ambala. I would like to relate this story a little later, and finally I am leaving it to the period of

December-January 1938 when I took over Command of 'A' flight No. 1 I.A.F. At Ambala after an absence of nearly eight months when I was attached to the Afghan Air Force at Drigh Road as an instructor.

In February and March 1938 nothing spectacular happened. Once we took Indian officers of the 16th Cavalry for a trip over Mohmand territory. Mukerjee, I, Aspee and Majumdar flew Shiv Dev Varma, Wadalia, Sheo Dutt Singh, and Idris. Captain Wadalia was with me. We had an exceedingly interesting trip chiefly over the territory of the Swat river. It was exceedingly nice to know that our brothers from the 16th Cavalry liked this trip so much. Story would have been a little different had they asked us to come and play a fast chukker of Polo with them.

In March I was detailed to go down to Risalpur for carrying out observation of heavy A.A. artillery on a drogue target to be towed at 15,000 feet. When I landed at Risalpur, it was lunch time. An army officer met me in the ante room. He was flying with me in the back cockpit for taking down observations. During lunch interval I had missed Flying Officer Maling who had come up from Drigh Road with a special Wapiti fitted up with the drogue towing mechanism. It was either Dick Maling's duty to coordinate the drogue towing with me in order that I took off with him and kept up in formation with him till an exceptionally long drogue line was reeled out; or it was mine to have talked to him. None of us spoke to each other. This is how serious and fatal accidents are caused through lack of coordination. When I started up the aircraft, I was informed by a British airman that the drogue towing Wapiti had already left. I made a hurried take off with the British army officer in the back seat; and climbed straight out towards the Nowshera Artillery ranges, across the Kabul river. I commenced a hurried climb, up and down the artillery ranges but for the love of mike, could not see Dick Maling anywhere. Never in reonnaissance have I strained my neck so much as I did that day. Right, left, forward, backwards, upwards, down wards, but the drogue Wapiti and a bright red drogue could not be seen anywhere. I think Dick Maling had disappeared behind the hills of Chirat and appeared over the ranges after he had obtained an

altitude of fifteen thousand feet. As I was still craning my neck in all directions outside the cockpit; like the shadow of a ghost, a large bright red object missed my head, moving in the opposite direction at a fantastic speed. It must have missed my head by not more than a few feet. I looked back and saw a very large red drogue sleeve target, resembling a very large wind indicator sock, moving away at a very high speed. There upon, I quickly turned round and saw Maling's aircraft about two hundred feet higher than mine. It was lucky that the sleeve target and a six hundred yards of cable did not hit me and get wrapped up round my aircraft. I would not have had the privilege of writing these pages.

I closed up on Dick Maling's aircraft. We did two chukkars over the artillery ranges at an altitude of fifteen thousand feet. Shells began to arrive. The British army officer sat facing the tail. He could watch all the shell bursts. Dick Maling had reduced the speed so much that it was difficult to keep up with him. The trimmer had almost to be wound right back in order to keep up with Dick. We remained over the ranges for nearly an hour. I expect every heavy ack ack gun at Nowshera had a crack at the drogue. The army officer appeared very happy. When I left him at Risalpur he smiled. "Was it a success" I enquired after we landed at Risalpur "Yes" he replied "The guns got very close to it. It was an exceptional success". He shook hands with me at Risalpur when I took off for Peshawar.

By March 1938 I received orders for posting to the Afghan Air Force at Drigh Road. I hated the idea of leaving my Squadron. It was so interesting at Peshawar. There was such a lot of tribal reconnaissance over the snow covered mountains. We played Hockey and football every day. There was a very good station Hockey team. Also I.A.F. had a Hockey and Football team of our own and played some interesting games in the local tournaments, both military and civil. I was captain of the I.A.F. Hockey team. Tennis in the officers mess was a daily enjoyment. Arthur Garland, Chris Wright, Anderson Paddy Cole, Mukerjee and I were on the Tennis lawns everyday. DOC Sandow and his Mrs. also were

regular with their daily visit. I hated the idea of leaving Peshawar and moving down to Drigh Road. Orders were orders! With a heavy heart I left for Drigh Road on about 5th April 1938.

A batch of Afghan School students arrived at Drigh Road on about the tenth of April. This was the second batch of Afghan cadets to be trained as officers for the Royal Afghan Air Force I was posted as one of the instructors on technical training, Navigation and flying.

It was nice to see 'B' and 'C' flights of No. 1 Squadron at Drigh Road. Officer's mess was full up with permanent residents. New arrivals had to stay in G.P. tents pitched outside the mess. One G.P. tent had a small tent attached as a bath room. Cement concrete base was provided about a foot higher than the sandy ground. P/O Mehar Singh's tent was at a little distance from mine. Mehar had just been married at Lyalpur He left his bride at Lyalpur but brought a few sacks of Indian sweet meats with him. An enormous sack of extra large sized luddoos was hung up from the central bamboo shaft of his tent. After dinner, every night, Mehar used to come to me "Zaidy-come and have a few luddoos". There upon we used to enter Mehar's tent and get hold of the sack. I must frankly admit that one extra large sized luddoo was enough for me. Mehar was a strapping big Sikh with a huge stomach that could almost devour half of Karach's sweet meats. Two to three dozen luddoos, made in Lyalpur by a Sikh Community of famed sweet meat makers was supposed to be a digestive tonic taken by Mehar every night after having a colossal meal in the mess with a final polishing up of half a dozen oranges.

After dinner Mehar's Sikh bearer used to collect all the oranges from the front of other members of the mess and used to place these one by one in front of his Sahib. Mehar used to fill up his pockets and after sipping about half a dozen refilled cups of coffee, used to walk about in he lawn, peeling oranges.

Mehar Singh had a small alsatian puppy 'Wolfie' which had a slight squint in the eyes. It could not see very well but it dodged the motorists on the road and found his way about, very well. Wolfie some-how developed a dislike towards the Afghan boys. In the

dead of the night, Wolfie would creep up to their quarters and commence stealing their shoes. By dawn next morning there were about twenty pairs of shoes dumped outside Mehar's tent with Wolfie sitting next to the heap in keeping up a continuous watch. If any Afghan boy came in search of his pair of shoes, Wolfie would display immense displeasure and bark furiously. Eventually the Afghan boys came to know the stunt that wolfie was a thief. They would chase wolfie all over the place. In the end they decided to close the doors at night, in order to protect their shoes from wolfie. This non-coopertion grew into bitter hatred. Wolfie was only six months old but had tremendous amount of courage. Generally, alsatian puppies are nervous and great cowards. But wolfie had such a courage of his conviction that he would stand up against a few Afghan boys and bark for half an hour. They used to annoy him by diverting his attention to an attractive object and then by pulling his tail. This trick wolfie despised immensely and used to go for them with his sharp teeth. In a few week's time the name of Sag-i-Mehar Singh (Mehar's dog) was a standing joke that brought about loud laughter from the Afghan boys.

By the end of April and early in May 1938, Mehar and all the other boys of I.A.F. disappeared from Drigh Road with their aircraft and equipment etc. No. 1 Squadron was being formed at Amala Cantonment. Smith had been promoted to the rank of a Squadron Leader. Mukerjee became the Adjutant of No. 1 Squadron. A new batch of pilot officers consisting of P/O Goyal, Arjan Singh and Prithipal Singh had arrived from the R.A.F. College Cranwell after receiving a doze of Army cooperation at Old Sarum and with No. 16 Squadron R.A.F. Wing Commander Horsley took over command of R.A.F. station Ambala, with No. 28 Spuadron R.A.F. and No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. He was exceedingly fond of the Indian officers and No. 1 Squadron. His efforts and help pushed us up a great deal.

I spent a very interesting period of eight months training with the batch of Afghan boys who were being trained as officers for the Afghan Air Force. Flight Lieutenant Mackenna, F/O Burt Andrews and I acted as Instructors. I had British Warrant Officer Harper,

Corporal Cotteral and LAC Nuttal and Naik Abdul Salam to help me on the technical side. For flying, I could ask T and D flight for an aircraft at any time. It was good fun and I thoroughly enjoyed my eight months with the Afghan Air Force. An additional allowance of Rs. 100 per month was admissible to us, as instructor's allowance. I stayed in a tent and had cut down my expenses considerably. Stay at Miranshah and at Drigh Road enabled me to exercise good economy and purchase a new Pontiac Saloon car at Peshawar in October 1938, at a price of Rs. 5,000 (Five thousand).

In December 1938 at the success-ful conclusion of Afghan training I received orders from the Station Commander Ambala to repot back to No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. Ambala immediately and take over command of 'A' flight No. 1. Squadron. This was a grand news. I said good bye to my Afghan brothers and left by train for Ambala.

I have forgotten to mention that In September 1938 I flew down in a T and D Wapiti to R.A.F. Park Lahore in order to help Group Captain Bussell and Mr. Tooke from A.H.Q. Simla in carrying out selection of a few officers from the army. In this recruitment board, Lieutenants Dilip Chowdhury from 7th Cavalry, Atam Nanda from 15th Punjab, Hussain from the 14th Hyderabad, Janjua from H.L.I. and Burhanuddin from the 5/10 Baluch were selected as P/O's for No. 1 Squadron and sent for training to Abu Suir in the Canal Zone of Egypt for training with the R.A.F. They were very thankful to met that they came to the Air Force. Group Captain Bussell at A.H.Q. was doing a tremendous amount to complete No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. and then start a nucleus of No. 2 Squadron at Ambala.

On a happy day in December 1938 I reached the railway station at Ambala. Narinder and Majumdar were there to receive me. I was hungry and drove down straight to the mess for a meal. At the gate of the mess I found the crests of both No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. and No. 28 Squadron R.A.F. side by side. The dininghall and the ante room were done up magnificently. Mukerjee's bearer gave me food at the table as my bearer had not settled down properly after the train journey.

After a hearty meal I strolled about in the lawn, and under a spreading tree. Mukerjee introduced Goyal, Arjan Singh and Pritinipal Singh to me. What a happy crowd of boys was there at Ambala!

I was asked to share a room with F/O Habeebullah Khan. Officers mess was full up with officers of No. 28 Squadron R. A. F. and officers of No. 1 Squadron I. A. F. After having a little midday Siesta I woke up. to find that Habeeb's bearer had brought tea for both of us. Afternoon tea with a small slice of cake has always been considered most enjoyable by the Air Forces in India. Habeeb went out in the verandah in his pyjamas. "Zaidy-come out and listen" he said. I went outside in the verandah in my pyjamas and dressing gown. From five of the six rooms occupied by Indian officers there came a sweet melody of music. F/O Goyal was practising on violin. Tandon had a music teacher banging away a violent beat on the tabla. Prithipal Singh had bought himself a Satar and was busy with it. Ganga Ram had bought himself a flute from the local market and was playing a melody of the Hooghly river, on it. Narendra had a banjo and was busy with it. Aspee could not play any musical instrument for nuts and had put on the gramphone with a sweet dream music of "Isle of Capri".

On listening to all that music I remarked "Heavens! It appears that Jack Hilton has moved his Head Quarters to R. A. F. mess Ambala" and then we both roared with laughter.

In the evening we changed into white clothes and played Tennis at the mess. Wing Commander Horsley had come up to play squash with the marker. Mukerjee asked me to meet Wing Commander Horsley. He was exceedingly nice and was pleased to say that command of the senior most 'A' flight was given to me.

After a hot bath,I changed into mess kit. Mehar tapped at the door and asked me to accompany him in looking up Captain Mohinder Singh Chopra who was an instructor at the army P. T. School. We walked down together. Mohinder Chopra was really a great friend of mehar's. His wife Jeet would not leave us till we had food there. This was an exceedingly noble suggestion because we were fed up with boiled lamb and snow potatoes that

we always got in the R. A. F. mess. Mutton pulao with plenty of spices and curry made our mouths water. I was not going to miss that lovely roti with butter which is always available in a Sikh Household. Sikhs are always, very hospitable friends. They would never let you miss food if the family is sitting down to it and you appeard in the dining room.

Next morning when I reported to Squadron Leader Smith I saw the new set up of No. 1 Squadron. Mukerjee was the adjutant. I had command of 'A' flight with Majumdar, Narender, Ravi Singh and Habeebullah Khan as pilots. Flight Sergent Wood and a few senior British N. C. O's acted as instructors for our Indian airmen, otherwise Corporal Ram Singh and Harjinder Singh were incharge of the two flights. 'B' flight was commanded by Aspee Engineer with Henry Runganadan, Mehar Singh, Goyal, Arjan Singh and Prithipal Singh as pilots. Lieutenants Janjua, Nanda and Burhanuddin had just got their wings at F. T. S. Abu Suir, but were not expected in Ambala till March 1939. Surjit Singh Majithia and Rup Chand had just been sent to Habbaniyah for flying training. Lieutenant Mohinder Verdi had just been seconded from the army and had been posted to Drigh Road for preliminary training before being sent to an F. T. S. in Scotland.

On the 7th of December 1938 I led two flights of No. 1 Squadron for the armament training camp at Drigh Road. It was a great pleasure to occupy bachelor's quarters on Gandhi hill once again. These quarters were specifically built in 1932 for the first batch of Indian officers. I had occupied room No. 1 from the road from May 1933 to 1st April 1936. Mukerjee occupied room No. 2 and similarly other rooms were occupied by Sircar, Tandon, Amarjit Singh and Bhupinder Singh. During our flight from Ambala to Karachi, it was the first time that I managed to obtain a W/T bearing from Jodhpur. Obtaining a W/T bearing was generally left to the civil airlines. Army cooperation and bomber squadrons of the air forces in India invariably utilized a combination of dead reckoning and map reading for cross country flying. H.S. Ghattak had reeled out a long aerial from the back cockpit and was busy in obtaining a bearing from Jodhpur. It worked

out magnificently. We were almost on the correct track.

Vickers quarter test (V.Q.T.) and Vickers Astern test (V.A.T.) were the two standard attacks prescribed for pilots. We went straight on to the V.Q.T. and V.A.T. attacks on the drogue target. Firing on ground targets was not considered necessary as regular pass had previously been obtained on air to ground targets at Peshawar and the Khyber firing ranges.

Our air gunners Wali Mohd, Ghulam Ali, Kartar Singh and Ali Mohd got a very good opportunity of successfully completing their Lewis quarter tests. Our scores were average. Some of the scores obtained by Paddy Cole and one or two other pilots from Risalpur were considered fantastic. These people either flew threw the drogue or did some other miracle. which was beyond our capabilities.

In the evening we played Tennis and Hockey. Rungie liked the evenings in Karachi. We were of the opinion that if a pilot watched Farida's Egyptian dance in Karachi and saw her finish a bottle of bear in a most spectacular acrobatic dance; where contents of a whole bottle disappeared; into a wrong place, the entire exhibition was extremely harmful for good flying and steady nerves for shooting on a drogue. However, Rungie had different views and went through the drogue once, having previously failed to obtain good marks with his front machine gun. On 18th December, on successful completion of A.T.C. camp, we returned back to Ambala. Mukerjee led the two flights. We reached Ambala by evening. Everyone in town used to feel happy when 1. Squadron returned back. In the evening we assembled at Major Rudra's house. He and Jacob's were exceedingly kind to us. We had many other friends in Ambala including Doctor Mukerjee, Nawabzada Fatehullah Khan and Mr. Haleem. Deputy Commissioner Shrinagesh was also a good friend. They used to come to see us several times and we went to see them also.

About the twenty fourth of December, 1938 an Xmas dance was organised at the officers mess. Many good looking dames came to this dance; both Indian and English. The club orchestra provided very good dance music. I still remember, that 'Donkey serenade'

was about the most popular tune played by the band that evening.

Next morning I left for Peshawar for a week's leave. I was engaged to a pretty girl in Peshawar. In the hectic routine of air force life, one never got a chance of seeing one's fiancee. In 1937, when she was studying in Saint Denn'ys Convent at Muree; Habeeb had brought one of her letters addressed to me at Miranshah, and dropped it from the air along with the official mail for Tocol, when I was sitting by the side of a fox hole, on the other side of Sherwangi Narai in Waziristan. That letter appeared to have been dropped from Heaven. It all appeared like a dream. Habeeb had written in this chit "This letter will make you happy-Smile; Cheerio, Habeeb."

I spent a very happy xmas and new year at Peshawar. My brother was also at Peshawar as S.P. December 1938 will probably remain as one of the happiest memories of my career in the Indian Air Force. I had driven down in my Pontiac 38 to Peshawar. It is incredible what a good American Car could do on the Indian Roads. On the completion of a week's leave in Peshawar, I left the Cantonment at 9 A.M. and reached Ambala by 9 P.M. after having lunch at Amritsar and after refuelling. If there had been fewer bullock carts on the road between Jehlum and Lahore and between Amritsar and Ambala, I could easily have cut down the timing by at least two hours.

By January 1939 Habeeb had brought his Mrs. down to Ambala and occupied a nice bungalow along the mall. Aspee and Ravi Singh had also brought their wives along and were occupying two very nice bungalows. Aspee's bungalow was the best on the Mall. Senior British officers including the Station Commander W/C Horsley and O.C. No. 60 Squadron, S/L Dick Yubee were bachelors. Therefore best bungalows were given to the Indian officers along the Mall. Henry Runganaden and Jaya occupied a nice bungalow just opposite to our mess. No. 28 Squadron had gone. They were replaced by No. 60 bomber Squadron, R.A.F.

There was a little rivalry between No. 60 Squadron R.A.F. and No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. Wing Commander Horsley showed liking and favours towards 1 Squadron.

This was not appreciated by the R.A.F. boys. We thought Wing Commander was an angel. Annual shooting competition against Patiala drew nearer. It used to be an annual fixture with a terrific party and drinks at the end of it. Dick Yubee was asked to pick up a team. He promptly selected a team out of the R.A.F. boys. They all drove down to Patiala lost the competition but had a terrific party. When Horsley was informed of this he was furious. He asked Dick Yubee officially to produce his R.A.F. shooting team to shoot against No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. It appeared in the routine orders and there was a terrific talk in the entire camp; in the cantonment and in the club. The appointed day came and the teams of the two squadrons met at the army firing ranges. Station armament officer was given strict instructions by Wing Commander Horsley to count the scores and be impartial. Benefit of doubt must be given to the junior squadron i.e. No. 1 I.A.F. our team consisted of myself, F/O Majumdar, F/O Narender, F/O Aspee Engineer, F/O Runganadan, F/O Habeebullah Khan, A.C. Kartar Singh, A.C. Wali Mohd, A.C. Ghulam Ali and A.C. Ali Mohd. On the R.A.F. side also there was an equal number of officers and men. We started at six hundred yards and closed in upto one hundred; firing in all types of positions, running, trotting, kneeling, lying down, both rapid and in slow time. All types of targets appeared on the range; fleeting targets, fixed, and every other category. On our side Sergeant Malik had volunteered to be at the range for checking and counting purposes. He was very happy and had a broad smile on his face.

Charts were prepared. *1. Squadron I.A.F. had won. I never thought that I was a good shot. But the result of the competition had put me number one alround on aggregate. Wing Commander Horsley was very happy indeed. He congratulated 1 Squadron in a special routine order of the day. He also promised that next year, in the Patiala cup, the composition of the shooting team to visit Patiala will be predominently from I.A.F. "Go and have a nice time in Patiala. H.H. is a wonderful man and he always gives the air force a very good time" said the Wing Commander. Unfortunately next year never came as 1. Squadron and all other R.A.F. Squadrons flew away in different directions to take up positions

along the vital parts of India's coastline and in Burma on the commencement of World War II,

Squadron Leader Smith's story pertains to tbis period at Ambala, about the first or second week of January 1939. As a typical South African he alway used to express his biased ideas with regard to black and white capabilities. Mrs. Smith was probably English and never expressed these ideas; or at least even if she had some of these peculiar black and white ideas, she always kept these to herself.

One day she came to play a game of squash with her husband, in the mess. At the end of the game she was getting a little pain in her back. Next day the back ache increased and on the fourth day she found that even walking was impossible. Smith took her tothe British Military Hospital where a Birtish Captain Surgeon incharge took an Ex ray of the spinal chord and advocated an immediate operation. There was no other alternative. A serious defect had set in the lower portion of the spinal chord, Without losing time, the poor darling was given chloroform and cut up. After patching up she apparently was making good progress upto the fourth day from the operation when some other serious complication set in the cut up portion of the spinal chord. The surgeon was a capable and a brave man. He decided immediately to put Mrs. Smith under chloroform and cut up the same part again in order to rectify any previous shortcomings if any. Unfortunately the lower portion of the human spinal chord is a peculiar item, and cannot possibly permit any mistakes.

A week before Mrs. Smith went into hospital, we had a game of Tennis together. After the game as evening shadows were enveloping the entire area; Mukerjee had ordered a glass of Whisky for Mrs. Smith and the Squadron Leader, and a glass of lemonade, for me, Henry, Jaya, Majumdar and himself. It was cold. We had put on a blazer and scarf and had parked ourselves in long arm chairs which were always available by the side of the Tennis Courts.

After having a few sips of whisky, Squadron Leader Smith said "It is very difficult to find a good Indian Tennis player who is aggressive enough like the western Tennis players". Mukerjee immediately replied "No-our

Ghaus Mohammad and Sawhney are the most aggressive players you could find between Singapore and the Suez Canal". Smith changed the subject from Tennis to Flying. "For example-let us compare flying. Indian pilots can fly really well, but it is so difficult to beat a really good English pilot" said he. At this time I butted in "Pardon me, Sir! British pilots are really first class but our bombing and firing results in the war of Waziristan were just as good as the best Birtish boys". Then Rungie cut in "Yes-Sir, You know that Squadron Leader Hamblin in Miranshah preferred an Indian pilot to that of No. 5 Squadron at any time".

Smith was being so much cornerned in front of his wife, The poor darling Mrs. Smith. kept quiet although from her face you could easily see that she was ready to jump to her husband's help at any minute. From flying, Smith switched over to medicine and surgery. "For example" said he "take medicine and surgery. I would hate to take my wife to any Indian doctor". The subject was getting more heated up and we considered that there was no point in arguing with your Squadron commander on the question of recial hatered knowing fully well that he was a South African. So we left it at that.

Darling, Mrs. Smith's condition was going from bad to worse. The second operation showed signs of a temporary success but within two days, she was sinking and it was feared that in another twenty four hours time, the poor darling may have to enter a wooden box. Thereupon the Birtish Captain, Surgeon incharge of B.M.H. Ambala telephoned General Head Quarters New Delhi and booked a top priority call for the Principal Medical Officer G.H.Q. I forget the name of P.M.O. G.H.Q. New Delhi at this time but I know that Group Captain Biscoe was P.M.O. at A.H.Q. Whoever was the person, the P.M.O. expressed unhappiness at what had been done. He informed the Surgeon at B.M.H. Ambala "You should have consulted us before undertaking such a serious operation of the spinal chord. There is only one person who is qualified to do such an operation in the whole of the medical services in India and that is Captain Chowdhury of the Indian Military hospital Sialkot. I am informing him immediately by army signals service and also by telephone to be present at the landing ground Sialkot within half an

hour from now. I am also informing Group Captain Biscoe to arrange with Horsley that an aircraft is sent immediately to pick-up Captain Chowdhury at Sialkot. Have everything ready in the operations theatre and send a staff car to the aerodrome at Ambala to bring Captain Chowdhury straight to the operations theatre of B.M.H. Pleasa hurry and have everything ready. Every minute means a question of life and death for this woman who is now sinking rapidly".

A series of immediate telephones rang between G.H.Q., A.H.Q. Ambala and Sialkot. If I am not mistaken, It was on the morning of a holiday. We all sat basking in the sun after breakfast. Wing Commander Horsley drove into the mess with great speed. He was excited. "Mukerjee! I want one of your pilots to go down immediately to Sialkot and pick up Doctor Chowdhruy who will be waiting at the landing ground. Please hurry. Mrs. Smith is sinking very rapidly. Every minute is a question of struggle against death. Hurry-Mukerjee!"

Rungie was the duty pilot that day. Mukerjee told Rungie to leave immediately for the hanger and get into his flying kit. Mukerjee ran in his car to the Indian Airmen's mess to get hold of Sergeant Ram Singh and Harjinder Singh for wheeling out the aircraft and having it started up. I ran to my office to get a map ready for Rungie with the track and distance marked for Sialkot. Majumdar and Narender ran in their cars to get the Air gunner or a mechanic ready for the flight. It worked like magic. In emergency the Indian officers got down to work like busy bees. Everything was so well coordinated and well done that the aircraft was started up on the tarmac within twenty minutes from the moment that Wing Commander Horsley said "Mukerjee, please run".

Rungie was a dare devil type of a fellow. He took off without going through the formality of warming and running up the engine with each magneto test. Soon rungie was airborne and heading towards Sialkot where Captain Chowdhury was already waiting for him at the landing ground.

By midday Wing Commander Horsley, Squadron Leader Smith, Surgeon from B.M.H., O.C. combined

hospitals, a few senior army officers of the medical service and Mukerjee were waiting for the aircraft to return. Then Rungie appeared over the horizon and glided in to land at the grassy aerodrome. Captain Chowdhury was a dark unimpressive type of a medical officer from probably Bengal or Madras side. He stepped out of his flying Sydcoat, helmet and goggles and looked a respectable type of a man rather than an intrepid aviator. He had brought a bag of special instruments with him. He was driven straight down to the B.M.H. In the operations theatre everything was kept ready. Chloroform was given to Mrs. Smith. Half a dozen nurses were on their toes. Captain chowdhury repeated the operation and corrected any mistakes which had been done before. The British surgeon and Captain Chowdhury had a late lunch in the officers club. It was almost getting on to tea time. By 3-30 P.M. Chowdhury was driven down to the aerodrome. F/O Runganadan was once again ready with his aircraft and soon disappeared over the horizon towards Sialkot along with Captain Chowdhury I.M.S. of the Indian Military Hospital Sialkot.

Within seven days Mrs. Smith was up in her bed. She was having a regular appetite at meal times and was putting on weight. In another fortnight, the roses were returning to her cheeks. She was so happy that an Indian had pulled her out of the jaws of death. Soon she completely recovered and was permitted to walk about. Air Headquarters arranged for her to be taken back to England or South Africa. Smith had not completed his full term of five years in India but was permitted to go back. In the mess we never mentioned a word about this episode and Smith's criticism of dark races. Smith and his Mrs. were gone. Then this story was related in Jick Rudra's house during dinner time. Mrs. Smith owes her life to an Indian. I hope Squadron Leader Smith will remember that dark races were not so bad as he thought. Some races have had the opportunities of forging ahead in life. Others have remained behind for the simple reason that opportunities have not come their way.

About this time a most spectacular demonstration of dive bombing was given to a party of visiting cadets

from the Royal Military academy Dehra Dun It was either 'A' flight No. 28 Squadron or No. 60 Squadron R.A.F. Amala that gave the demonstration. Echelon to the right formation of four audaxes and harts dive bombed the middle of the aerodrome where a big cross had been marked out. It was one of the most perfect formation bombing that I have ever seen. All bombs fell on the target. Four repeated dive attacks were carried out. R.A.F. Boys when they are determined to do a thing, are really wonderful. Batch of cadets from Dehra Dun was so much impressed.

We were concentrating on tactical, photographic and artillery reconnaissance as orders had been received for 'A' flight No. 1 squadron under my command to proceed to Bangalore for tactical reconnaissance with the Southern Command. Generally, this task was an annual affair and used to be carried out by a flight of the Royal Air Force from No. 5,20, or 28 Squadrons which were army cooperation Squadrons. There used to be a terrific booz-up party and a beat up before the flight returned back to Rawalpindi, Peshawar, or Ambala. There were always terrific stories about the parties, beat ups and popsies in Bangalore. Our 'B' flight under F/O Wilkie had done this before in 1938 with some success, but all that success, was marred by an unfortunate accident where Wilkie crashed on the aerodrome during an army demonstration where hundreds of army officers were present. Other members of the party consisted of F/O's Majumdar, Narender, Mehar Singh and Bulbul Khan.

Group Captain Bussell at Air Headquarters was exceedingly keen to boost up the Indian Air Force. Orders were received to proceed to Bangalore by the end of January 1939. I was to take my flight down with F/O's Majumdar, Ravi Singh and Bulbul Khan. F/O Narender was to set up our camp on the old landing ground which was only 400 yards X 400 yards. This was going to be a real effort to make a Wapiti sit down in four hundred yards with no wind and at an altitude of Bangalore which was roughly 2,500 ft above mean sea level. I decided not to take any of the younger boys. Last year Wilkie had crashed and what appearod to be a wonderful success was almost ruined with this incident.

About a week before we were due to set sail for Bangalore, Mukerjee asked Narender to go down by train to Bangalore and with the help of the army set up a nice camp for us at the landing ground.

I left Narender at Ambala Cantt railway station in my Pontiac car., When he parked himself in the 1st class, the other lads of the village also turned up i.e. Habeeb, Majumdar, Ravi, Goyal, Mehar etc. I gave him the last few instructions "Please ensure that rations of troop are dumped well ahead of time. We must have sufficient stocks of petrol at the landing ground. Please see the Brigade Major and the staff Captain." "Please-don't worry. I know Bangalore, the army and everything there. I shall arrange tents, ration, sufficient stocks of petrol, and the picketing place for aircraft" was the answer. "I also know some Popsies and with your permission shall ask them to tea at the aerodrome every other day". This produced great laughter from everyone. Eventually the trainpuffed out of Ambala Cantonment station. Narender was waving his hand His voice could still be heard "I shall arrange everything-tents, rations, petrol ..... and.....that". There was a broad grin on his face as the train disappeared from the station.

On 25th January 1939, four of us taxied out to the far end of the aerodrome. Mukerjee as adjutant No. 1 Squadron stood on the tarmac. Almost the whole of No. 1 Squadron had turned out to see 'A' flight off to Bangalore for army manoeuvres. We were leaving in the aftenoon after lunch as it was our intention to make a night stop at Jodhpur. When I raised my hand I found Majumdar on my left, Habeeb and Ravi on my right revving up till their aircraft were almost moving forward. They followed me nicely in the take off. Every aircraft was loaded up under the wings with bed rolls, suitcases, boxes and tool kits etc. When heavily loaded up, the controls are sluggish. I always used to make a quick take off and then throttle back like Bouchie, in order to enable everyone to catch up. I climbed straight ahead above the wireless masts situtated on the southern side of the aerodrome. I did a left hand turn and then signalled with my left hand for Majum, Habeeb, and Ravi to close in. It was always a custom before departing on a long cross country, to come in tight formation over the home aerodrome.

Usual custom was a diamond formation or what was popularly called the A.H. Charlie formation, When well clear of the aerodrome, I signalled again with my left arm and the formation opened up to a respectable distance. I set course for Jodhpur and sat on the compass for three and a half hours. It was quite a task in those days to sit on your compass for seven or eight hours. Biplanes of those days without the automatic pilot (George) and cruising at slow speeds of ninety miles per hour, with a large rudder area were very sensitive to drift. In modern aircraft cruising at 300 or 400 M.P.H. the rudder becomes ineffective after take off. During flight the rudder cannot move a fraction. But in the army cooperation or bomber two seater aircraft like a Wapiti, Audax and Hart of those days, the rudder was sensitive even during flight. The pilot had to manipulate the rudder through very small degrees, all the time during flight in order to keep on course.

Jodhpur was an exceedingly good aerodrome to obtain bearings from. My wireless operator Ghattak had wound the aerial out and obtained a very good bearing. We were not far from our track.

Majumdar knew Rao Raja Narpat Singh, who was an uncle of H.H. the Maharaja of Jodhpur. H.H. was exceedingly kind to the Royal Air Force. He had given a standing invitation to the Royal Air Force that any officer passing through Jodhpur was to be treated as a state guest. For years all officers of the Royal Air Force and Indian Air Force stayed at the State Hotel Jodhpur and signed as Maharaja's guests. There was no limit to food and drink and if you informed A.D.C. to H.H., you could even get some horses for riding, hunting or polo.

Majumdar had become very friendly with Rao Raja Narpat Singh during the visit of H.H. the Maharaja of Jodhpur to Air Force station Ambala. Before leaving Ambala Majumdar had sent a telegram to Rao Raja Narpat Singh about our arrival. We landed and had hardly commenced refuelling when Rao Raja Narpat Singh and his son turned up with three magnificient state limousines. We were taken to the state hotel as Maharaja's guests. Their hospitality was really magnificent. Food and drinks and the entire expenditure at the hotel was put down to the State of Jodhpur. The Maharaja had a

soft corner for the Air Force. During the war he was the first Indian prince to have been made an Air Commodore in the Air Forces of India. All officers of the Air Force continued to enjoy this hospitality till the second World War II when in the year 1940 a few young pilots of the Royal Air Force not belonging to aristrocatic families and having no idea about the ruling princes of India and their hospitality; had a drunken party at the expense of Jodhpur state and broke up furniture and fittings in the beautiful state hotel. These fittings and furniture had been specially imported from France, Italy, and England. The Maharaja when informed of the incident did not at all appreciate the behaviour of these young pilots of the Royal Air Force. He cancelled the standing invitation to all officers of the Air Forces in India.

Next morning, I had asked for a truck and two state limousines to call about an hour before dawn at the State Hotel. We had a very comfortable sleep during the night. Early in the morning after shave and hot bath we had our breakfast and drove down to the aerodrome. Our faithful airmen were already there, ready with the forms 700 for signing up before flight. Suitcases etc. Were tied up in luggage racks under the lower mainplanes. We took off singly and joind up at a height of five hundred feet. I had asked Ravi Singh to take an oblique photograph of our close formation over the Jodhpur fort. The old fort and Maharaja's new palace which was being constructed were the two most ineresting objects of Jodhpur. On the previous day we were taken round the old fort on a sight seeing tour. On the massive gate and its sides there were tiny hand prints of beautiful Rajput pricesses who committed Satti when their Rajput Warriors rushed out of the fort in performing rite of Jauhar when besieged by the Pathan hordes centuries ago. We listened to the old music also in the fort which was reminiscent of the bygone days of the prosperity of Rajput Kings.

After having made three attempts at close formation over the old fort of Jodhpur with Ravi trotting about all over the skies trying to take us and the Rajput fort in the same photograph; we came over the aerodrome in the usual, A.H. Charlie formation. I looked down and saw our beloved refuelling friend Gurcharan Singh

of the Burmah Shell in his Khaki Warm uniform and a pale yellowish Khaki turban, waving at us.

I signalled for the formation to open out and set course for Mhow. We reached Mhow by lunch time, and commenced to refuel with those two gallon drums of Burmah Shell supplied through the R.A.S.C. There were hundreds of British and Indian troops who came to watch the fun. Mhow cantonment was an out of the way type of a place. Troops never saw an aircraft for years. A British Lieutenant Colonel came and asked us to lunch at the officers mess of a British infantry battalion.

This was a very noble gesture, because our egg and cheese sandwiches had already become hard and useless. Ravi and Majumdar had drunk all the tea from the thermos flasks when still in flight over the plains of central India. We had a very quick lunch and walked back to the aerodrome. We helped Habeeb to start up his aircraft, then Ravi and Majumdar. I as flight Commander took off last of all. We had learnt a trick with a Bristol VIII F.P. engine. Bottom four plugs were replaced after oil was permitted to drain out of the plug holes. Cleaned up and new plugs were inserted in place of the four plugs which were always oiled up badly. This was due to collection of oil in the sump of the engine. With the four new or cleaned up plugs the engine used to start up very easily in spite of the fact that carburation used to be upset considerably when the engine was hot. Majumdar, Ravi, Habeeb and I twirled the hand starter mags like the dickens when the airmen were turning the handle and cranking the engine. Immediately she kicked, the airmen shouted for bag and rope. With a bag and rope the airmen pulled at the propellors. In one or two cases when there was a back fire; the bag and rope was thrown upwards and skywards and the three airmen landed on heir backside, one over the other with terrific laughter. This was good fun for the British troops who had collected in large numbers at the edge of the aerodrome to watch the fun and roar with laughter. British troops at mhow had never seen Indian pilot officers. This must have been a great entertainment, like a visit to a Museum.

Ravi took off first, then Habeeb, then Majumdar

and last of all was my turn. I watched each one of them take off. A Wapiti looks a most beautiful object, rolling forward under speed and gradually attaining momentum before leaving the ground with bed rolls and boxes slung under main planes. We had beautiful blue and black squares painted up like a chess board on the top side of upper wings and on both sides of the fuselage. Wheels were painted black with large red discs or wheel covers on the outer sides.

When I left the ground, the three of them closed in on me. I carried out a circuit and we came in close formation over Mhow Aerodrome. Soon afterwards, past the aerodrome; I moved them into open formation and set course for Secunderabad Cantonment.

I was very much impressed by the picturesque countryside we were passing. A line of hills and then a river. A typical tiger country which would be a shikari's paradise. A lovely bridge over a stream and a train puffing across the bridge. I usually kept two sets of goggles. A plainglass one for landing and take off and a light green tinted pair for long range cross country flying. Glare from a strong sun across the deserts and plains of our country is tremendous. Even in winter time in an open cockpit of the bygone days, we used to wear coloured goggles for affording protection from strong glare. Air Ministry's store section was really wonderful. All types of tinted flying goggles, sun topees, leather helmets, flying boots and Sydcoats etc. were issued to each pilot.

I pulled out my coloured goggles from the front pocket of my white overall. I always used to wear a black woolen scarf with a white overall, having silver buttens with I.A.F. crest.

We passed over a most interesting portion of green plains with many streams and rivers. In the territory of the Nizam of Hyderabad, it was evident from a height of 6,000 feet that a very clever system of damming up of rivers and devising of irrigation canals had been perfected by the State Engineers. It was a fairly long flight from Mhow. We had a tiresome task of flying the whole day after having been up about an hour before dawn at Jodhpur.

We reached Secunderabad about half an hour before sunset. We landed at Hakimpet Aerodrome. Staff Captain from Bolarum was waiting for us with large stocks of aviation fuel brought by the R.A.S.C. We were informed that 7th Cavalry had very kindly agreed to put us up for the night. After a few minutes, Captain Dalip Choudhury of the 7th Cavalry who was Quarter Master of his unit drove upto the aerodrome in an old Ford V8 with a torn hood. Cavalry types always possessed rotten cars for the simple reason that all their money was spent on polo ponies and horses. Dalip volunteered to take me and his cousin Majumdar. Habeeb and Ravi stayed with our aircraft and picketed these firmly for the night. Covers were tied on to the propellors, engines, cockpits, and wheels. Cleets were clamped on to the rudder, elevator, and ailerons.

We had a hot bath and changed into dinner jackets. Dalip drove us down to the Char Minar and the big mosque and Nizam's palace for a sight seeing trip. We were looking at the Char Minar when a series of whistles pierced through the calm air. Policemen ran in all directions. Traffic came to a dead halt when His Most Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad passed in a long limousine. We were most impressed with the pomp and glory of an independent ruler, but I preferred the calm and quiet of British India. In Peshawar; when the Governor of N.W.F.P. Sir George Counningham passed in a car along the Mall, traffic police had instructions not to blow a whistle and not to stop even a cyclist or a pedestrain passing by.

Then Dalip drove us down to Officers Club of Nizam's own Cavalry Brigade. Only a few officers were present. I was not impressed by Colonel El Edrush's hospitality who never even asked us for a cold drink. When he came to Peshawar and flew with us over the tribal territory, we almost opened our hearts to him. I placed my two seater Chevrolet at his disposal when he stayed with us at the R.A.F. mess Peshawar in the year 1937. He flew with me over the Afridi Tirah. Personally I feel that he did not recognise me that evening otherwise I am quite sure, that he would not have shown so much indifference to us.

Dalip informed me that I was asked to dinner by Major Mohd Ali, who was one of the senior most King's Commissioned Indian Officers in the army. He was Commanding one of the Squadrons of the 7th Cavalry regiment stationed at Secunderabad. I was therefore left at Major Mohd Ali's house. Majumdar, Habeeb and Ravi Singh went to dine with Captain and Mrs. Moochu Chowdhry. Moochu at that time was the regimental adjutant in the 7th Cavalry.

The evening passed off most delightfully. I had a wonderful dinner with Major and Mrs. Mohd Ali. We talked a lot about Captain Gulsher who was a cousin of Major Mohd Ali. Gulsher and I were together in the Indian Coronation Contingent of 1937 which took part in the coronation of King George VI in London on 12th May 1937.

I related so many humorous stories of Indian officers on H.T. Neuralia that every one laughed. After dinner Major Mohd Ali dropped me in his car at the residence of Captain Dalip Chowdhury.

Next morning we woke up early. I always believed in the famous verse repeated so many times by my uncle Captain Awan who was a war veteran of the first World War 1914-1918."

"مسافر شب سے اٹھتے ھیں جو جا نا دور ھوتا ھے"

I always said my morning prayers and sincerely prayed for the success of I.A.F.

Dalip leftus at Hakimpet Aerodrome after giving us very early breakfast in his regimental mess. Our Airmen were wonderful. They had already arrived from the troops lines in a truck and had removed covers and pickets; changed the plugs, turned the props, and were almost ready for starting up. Forms 700 were kept ready. We quickly tied up our kit on to the luggage carriers; started up the engines and took off singly. We did a round of Secunderabad and Bolarum cantonments. 7th Cavalry were engaged in regimental drill. After waving out a good-by to them, I set curse for Bangalore.

A picturesque countryside lay in front of us. We crossed many rivers and streams. After an approximate two hours, the famous Nandi Drug (hill) appeared

to the right. When we came near Nandi Drug, the city of Bangalore lay right in front with its white buildings, open play grounds, towers, and lakes. It was a fairly large city. We came fairly low over our camp. I had signalled an Echelon to the right. We broke off one by one starting with the leader. This looks very impressive if done at a regular interval of five seconds and then if all follow the leader, in to land. Majumdar volunteered to land first as the landing ground was very tricky. Only 400 yards X 400 yards was available with a fairly steep slope towards the city. Majumdar had landed here during 1938 when 'B' flight had come to this place for army cooperation with the Southern Command. I followed Majumdar on a rumble in technique and under-shooting from the city side. Everyone made a successfull and short landing. We parked the aircraft in a corner of the landing ground near our tents. An army sentry had been posted to look after the aircraft. Narender met us with a broad smile. He had set up a very nice mess in a G.P. tent. Rations and wonderful food stuffs; tinned biscuits, jams, mango chutney, pickles, cheese, tea and sugar was already stocked up. Fresh meat, vegetables and bread was procured from the city. Narendra smiled- "How did the trip go?" "Very nice" was my reply. "With your permission sir, I have asked some dames to come to lunch here in the mess. I hope there will be no objection"? Then there was loud laughter from Habeeb and Majumdar and we all joined in.

In the afternoon we paid a visit to the Divisional Headquarters. G. 1 of the division took us to see the Divisional Commander, who was a very kind hearted old man. He shook hands with all of us and wished us success in reconnaissance in connection with army cooperation and Southern Command manoeuvres. For two days we tuned up our wireless sets. A ground party was sent to Trimmul-Gari where the army were camping. Besides a few battalions of the army, there was a fully Indianised battery of artillery under the command of Lt. Colonel Garry who was an old pilot in the Royal Flying Corps during the first world war of 1914-18. He was very fond of flying and flew with me several times to check up the artillery live shooting carried out by his battery.

Same evening we paid a courtesy call to the officers mess at Trimmul Gari, and had tea with the Indian and British officers. It was nice to see our old friends Prem Singh Gayani, Dutt and Kumaramangalam of the Indian Artillery.

We sent a powerful ground set with the Indian artillery and tested it from the air. I flew over the camp and tested our ground wireless set. The airmen were prompt in putting out the ground strips. Next day was the actual shoot. In accordance with the three day scheme, the entire division was out. There were thousands of men and vehicles out in the open. At the appointed time I commenced the two way communication with the battery I was cooperating with. A complete message regarding the enemy target was sent in code on the T32 transmitter. There was such a pleasure in tapping the key. I had tremendous amount of confidence in myself in artillery reconnaissance. From the days of Old Sarum 1932 to 1938, six years had been spent in specialising in army cooperation where artillary reconnaissance was one of the main subjects. The shoot went off like magic. When I returned back, all officers and airmen had a broad smile on their face. They had tuned in a ground W/T set and were listening in to my morse and that of the battery, which was in fact one of ours. As the observations started getting nearer the target, there was a general applause from all officers and airmen.

At the time that I was carrying out an artillery shoot, Majumdar was carrying out tactical reconnaissance on the same side of the Blue force, against the Red Force. Similarly Habeeb and Ravi Singh carried out artillery shoots, tactical and photographic reconnaissance as ordered by the Blue force. In one of the shoots, Col Garry Commanding Officer of the Indian Artillery flew with me in the back cockpit and observed a live shoot from the air. He was very much pleased with the correct observations transmitted by me and good corrections applied by one of the Indian batteries. The target almost received a direct hit.

For nearly ten days we carried out a continuous programme of tactical, artillery and photographic reconnaissance. Late in the evening I used to drop complete

sets of line overlaps and mosaic or pinpoint photographs on the divisional Headquarters in the field. During reconnaissance, all our tactical reports were passed to the Brigade, Battalion or battery with whom we were cooperating by means of Radio Telephony. R31B R/T sets were used. The type of microphone used can easily be seen in the British Science and war museum at Kensington, London. The contraption was supposed to be ultra modern in the year 1939, but if this equipment was seen and worked in modern times; one would marvel at how any results were achieved at all.

On the evening of the 1st Saturday; Narander appeared very happy. Majumdar, Ravi, and Habeeb had broad smiles on their faces. "What is cooking" I asked them. There was a spontaneous and loud laughter. "We have asked a few dames to dinner in our mess and then a moonlight chehoy party by the side of the blue lake near our camp" This was a very good suggestion. I intended to join in the dinner but keep out of the chehoy party. Bangalore was famous for its pretty dames. I was engaged to a nice looking girl in Peshawar. So, music and pretty dames by the side of a blue lake in Bangalore did not hold much infatuation for me.

In the evening after dropping photographs on the Divisional H.Q. at Hazargatta, I carried out a few loops over the camp. A poor Wapiti with only a maternity harness, terrific wings and fuselage and a Bristol 8 F.P. 450 H.P. engine was not such a wonder aircraft to throw about in the skies. In fact Air Ministry did not recommend even loops or spins or any other type of aerobatics. But we used to carry out loops occasionally.

In 1938, Wilkie and Majumdar carried out loops in a demonstration given to the army at about dusk time. They illuminated landing flares fixed under the main planes, before commencing looping. Our Warrant Officer did not advocate this type of stunt as magnesium flares in an inverted position could easily set fire to the fuselage or wings. I therefore did not encourage lighting up of wing tip flares.

Practioally all of us used to carry out loops over the army camp and the city of Bangalore when not

carrying wireless sets, cameras, guns, bomb carriers etc. Many people and children used to admire four Wapitis looping the loop over the city of Bangalore in the Crimson rays of the setting sun.

We changed into dinner jackets for that evening as a few dames were coming to dinner. Narender promptly disappeared in the early hours of the evening aud brought with him a nice bouqet of young dames. After dinner they all disappeared towards the lake side which was at a distance of about 800 yards from our camp. I heard giggling and laughter as the cars disappeared. I returned to my tent, changed into pyjamas; switched off the light and got into bed. I intended to get up early in the morning as a signal was received stating that Wing Commander Horsley was arriving by air tomorrow morning from Ambala.

At about 2 A.M. our staff car driver entered my tent and started burbling about a long winded story of what was goingon by the lakeside. "Look at my eye sir" he said. I switched on the light and saw the driver standing by my bed side with a terrible black eye. What had happened was that the boys had taken the staff car, loaded it up with dames and drove it round and round the blue lake at tremendous speed. When the civilian driver objected to this merriment and hilarity; Majumdar hit him with a right hook, knocking him to the ground. This was quite a serious thing. I asked him to report in the morning for investigation. The boys smelt danger in their sober moments and bribed the driver with two ten rupee notes. This was enough for him to keep quiet. He never showed his face to me next morning.

We had hardly finished breakfast when I heard a Wapiti overhead. This was Wing Commander Horsley. Wonderful show! The old man had flown all the way from Ambala to see our work at Bangalore. It was a most creditable performance to have come all that way alone. He had a slightly damaged leg also from the last war of 1914-18. All these old timers of the last war were pilots and men of terrific calibre. Bouchier, Silvester, Bingo Brown, Basil Embry, Fairweather, Bottomley, Whitelock, Chisman, Slessor, Bill anchors, Allwood, David Atcherley, Horsley, Pattison, etc. etc.

I remember that Wing Commander Slessor used to get terribly annoyed if any one helped him out of an aeroplane for the sake of a damaged and weak leg. Similarly if any person helped Wing Commander Horsley for a weak leg, there used to be an immediate challenge thrown in for a game of squash at Ambala.

I ran across the landing ground and displayed a T for the direction of landing. There was an appreciable slope and I was worried that the old man may not be able to get in. He made a dummy run and then got in with the greatest of ease. He had a broad smile on his face. I helped him take off his Syd coat. We walked to the mess where very good meal was provided. We had a long chat on how the army manoeuvres and tactical reconnaissance was going on. He was pleased with our results. Before lunch he went to make a courtesy call on the Divisional Commander, Major General Moreton who informed him that he would like to fly with the Indian boys to check up a camouflage scheme completed by the Madras Sappers and Miners.

Next morning, Major General Moreton turned up at the landing ground. He was a very kind hearted old man and plainly told me "I am not used to flying. If you go roud and round the camouflaged scheme, I am sure, I shall feel giddy. Fly up and down the scheme in order that I may have a good look". I flew very gently indeed with only gentle rate one or two turns to the right or left over the scheme. Many a railway bridge and culvert had been cleverly camouflaged by the Sappers and Miners. It was very cleverly done. If I had not known about the camouflage, I could never have spotted out the bridges and culverts and a small camp.

At the end of the exercise we gave a cup of tea to Major General Moreton in our mess. He was very pleased indeed and left in a happy mood. Horsley was more pleased than anyone else. Everyone in the Divisional Head Quarters was pleased about the work of the Indian flight. A first class chit was given by the Divisional Commander and everything went off very well indeed. The only black show we had put up was giving a black eye to the civilian driver of the staff car during the moonlight serenade by the lake side and excessive use of Govt.

petrol in running up and down to the army camp at Hazarguta, the city of Bangalore and trip to Mysore which was officially logged under the reconnaisance scheme. But army authorities were reluctant to accept a black eye for the driver and about two hundred miles drive to Mysore under the reconnaissance scheme, where we saw the tombs of Hyder Ali, Tippu Sultan, Sirringapatam fort, and Saturday's illuminations at Raj Sagar, Mysore. I told Majumdar, Ravi and Habeeb that there would be objections but the blighters told me that all that, was in the game and was a sort of semi official privelege enjoyed by the flight during 1938 and by all the fore runner flights of the Royal Air Force since times immemorial.

When the news of a black eye and the midnight symphony sinarta got to Ganga Ram at Ambala he was furious. Eventually, Wing Commander Horsley at Ambala came to our rescue with the remarks "Well-Ganga ! after all, boys are boys ! I was young also once upon a time. What a time we used to have in France during 1917-18 when a few boys of the R.F.C. got to gether. We shall forget about this."

On the evening of 8th February we threw a big party to the selected officers of Bangalore Cantonment and a few civilians and their wives. Expenditure was entirely subscribed by us. It was a tea party with cakes and pastries etc. Two G.P. tents were joined up with about sixty chairs and army type of tables. We went down to the local bazar and collected some cakes and pastries and hired crockery etc. We had laid a little flying demonstration also. Our four Wapiti aircraft were cleaned up with Brasso and polish, till these almost shone brightly. Then we lined up our pretty J9751,J9633,K1289 and J9755 infront of the tents where tea was to be served. We made it certain to place the aircraft at a little distance in order that dust and sand was not thrown on the spectators during demonstration. Wing Commander Horsley was asked to receive the guests. Motor cars commenced to arrive by 3 P.M.

A very neat little party was laid on. Guests began to arrive punctually on time. Major General Moreton and Mrs. Moreton also graced the occasion. After spending about fifteen minutes with the guests, which included practically all the senior officers and their wives,

we left our guests after they had a good sip of tea. We went out of the G.P. tents and put on our flying sydcoats, parachute, helmets and goggles and walked towards the aircraft. Lt Colonel Garry had asked me to take him up. He was busily putting on his sydcoat and parachute harness as he was walking up to the aircraft by my side. I was to fly J9751. The four Wapitis were started up in good time. I led a formation of three aircraft with Majumdar on my left and Habeeb on my right. Ravi had formed up as No. 4 in the take off but was leftbehind in the initial stage on the ground, as the landing ground, was only 400 × 400 and my instructions to Ravi were to take off independently due to the limitations of space for take off. Eventually Ravi joined up in the air as was prearranged. I brought the formation four times over the aerodrome, and demonstrated a flight Vic formation, a close A.H. Charlie formation, an Echelon to the right formation and a line abreast formation. Wapitis with a big wing span did appear a beautiful sight in all the various formations of flight drill. After four pass-overs I signalled for the formation to break off, Thereupon, Ravi came over the aerodrome and dropped two ration containers by means of parachutes. These fell in front of the army spectators. One of the I.A.F. Corporals opend the nicely packed containers and showed a live hen with lots of eggs. This produced great laughter from the army spectators. The poor hen had a nice trip in the flight formation drill and parachute drop-Not a single egg. was broken. Then Habeeb came in after Ravi's performance. His air gunner had rceled out a big hook slung underneath the fuselage. Habeeb came in at a good speed and picked up a message slung across two short poles fixed to the ground. Spectators clapped as Habeeb picked up two out of three messages The third one was picked up on the wheels. Both these items were of great interest to the army. In the field of air cooperation, message picking up and dropping of rations is of vital importance. After Habeeb's performance and landing ; Majumdar landed. I was the last to land. We had planned to carry out loops one by one over the landing ground from an altitude of 3,000 feet but unfortunately all over aircaft had now been fitted up with wireless sets, cameras, and machine guns for the flight back to Ambala and could not be put into an inverted

position. Loop was the only thing that a darling Wapiti could do. With a maternity harness; rolls and half rolls were out of question. We had purposely cut out loops with illuminated magnesium wing tip flares, as was done by 'B' flight in January 1938. This was considered dangerous by our armament warrant officer. With fabric covered wings and fuselage, a magnesium flare in a strong slipstream could easily set fire to the aircraft.

On the 9th Februry we went and said goodye to all our army friends at Hazargutta camp. We also paid a visit to Divisional H.Q. and said goodbye to General Moreten and his staff. We thanked the G2 and Staff Captain who had done such a lot for arranging our tents, rations, petrol, staff car etc. We also thanked col. Garry of the Indian artillery for a very. fine cooperation in the field, between guns and aircraft. We made sure to shake hands with Lieutenants Mangat Rai Kumaramangalam and Prem Singh Gayani.

We struck camp on the morning of 10th February 1939 and set course for Secunderabad on our way back home to Ambala via Jodhpur. In the fifth aircraft Wing Commander Horsley was also with us. He was a seasoned avaitor of the last war of 1914-18. He very kindly permitted me to lead the formation. When we landed at Secunderabad, Brigade Commander had sent this staff car and the staff Captain to receive Wing Commander Horsley. He was taken away for breafast to the brigade Commander's house. Dalip Chowdhury had again turned up in his Ford and insisted on taking us away to his mess for breakfast. We had very little time as cruising at an average 95 M.P.H; We had planned to make Jodhpur by 4 P.M, So there was no point in having a late breakfast in regimental messes till 11 A.M., when aircraft had to be refuelled with two gallon drums. So we thanked Dalip who stood there twirling his moustache in a Cavalry fashion. "Sorry Dalip-Aircraft have to be refuelled and we have five aircraft including Wing Commander's".

We left Hakimpet Aerodrome punctually at 11.30. Wing Commander was most considerate and returned within half an hour. Five airmen and four of us filled up the five aircraft with petrol and oil in about onehour. Bottom four sparkplugs in each aircraft had also been replaced. There was no time to do a circuit of

Secunderabad and Bolarum Cantonments as we had done on our way out to Banglore. I set course straight for Jodhpur after allowing for a little drift in accordance with the met forecast that I had obtaind from observatory at Bangalore,

At about 1 P.M. I asked my wireless Operator H.S. Mukerjee to pass some sandwiches and a theroms containing hot tea. I also asked him to take some. These sandwiches were produced in our own tented mess at Bangalore. The cook was given some extra bucksheesh for having been such a faithful servant. At about 2 P.M., we had already crossed the green tropical belt and were passing over a belt which had more stones than green colour. At about 3 P.M. we had crossed into the Rajputana desert with practically no land marks. There was only another forty five minutes to go, before winding in my aerial prior to effecting a landing at Jodhpur. I looked round. I was getting tired of sitting on the compass and map reading. Majumdar, Habeeb, Ravi, and Wing Commander Horsley were following me at a good distance. Suddenly I looked to the front and saw a black cloud rising very rapidly on the horizon, The cloud rose so repidly that it enveloped almost half of the sky. It was now quite evident to me that the black envelopingcloud was a terrific sand storm moving in from the North. Within a few seconds, Majumdar, Habeeb, Ravi and Horsley came trotting up to me and stuck to me in a tight formation for fear of losing the leader in a black sand storm. Within half a minute we were in the sand storm. Sand and dust rose sky high. We were coming along at 6,000 feet but the dust storm seemed to rise up to about 15,000 ft. It dawned on me that I had forgotten to send a telegram to Aerodrome Officer Jodhpur for keeping a special watch on our or their W/T frequency. Our W/T sets were weak and in bad weather, very poor results were obtained. I made a gesture with hand to my wireless operetor to get a bearing from Jodhpur D/F station. Unfortunately Jodhpur was busy working an air mail aircraft from Imperial Airways flying between Calcutta and Jodhpur. So there was no joy from Jodhpur.

If the dust and sand storm had hit us an hour earlier, we would not have minded it so much as Habeeb had just completed a Navigation course organised by

A.H.Q. at Murree. He had done exceedingly well in competition with British Officers. Majumdar and Ravi were both old aviators, seasoned up on the North West Frontier of India. They had flown on this track previously. I was sure to get lot of help from them. Unfortunately in a dust storm with no wireless D/F facilities, even a most seasoned aviator would be frightened, when down below there is pitch darkness and when map reading is impossible. We were almost at the end of our petrol endurance.

I looked to the right and left. Generally in a long cross country when a leader looks to the right and left, he expects to see a grin or the popular sign of the two fingers which we had learnt from the Royal Air Force. But on this occasion of poor visibility between aircraft and aircraft, leave alone the grin; all faces were grim. There was no smile, no grin, and no sign of the two fingers pointed at the flight Commander, which although not a polite gesture by any means, but is yet acceptable to many Flight Commanders, depending upon the popularity of the boys, and the distance of the cross country during which monotony of continuous flight and a strong sun has to be broken with a few jovial gestures from different cockpits.

I realised the fright of the boys. My own heart was beating quicker than usual. Down below was darkness. Upstairs was also darkness. There was no joy from Jodhpur on W/T or D/F. Petrol was running low as we were at the end of our endurance. There was no end to the depth or height of the dust storm. And here was the British Station Commander following an Indian Flight, which he always praised and whose high ideals he always admired right upto the Air Head Quarters.

The dust storm catching us up at the end of our petrol endurance had literally taken our pants off. I never thought a dust storm could be as dirty as that. For once I prayed sincerely to the Almighty from the cockpit of an aircraft aloft at 6,000 feet. As a Muslim I bent my head down and prayed sincerely "O' God, help me lead this flight to a safe destination" A sincere prayer of a Muslim is always answered. Pitch darkness cleared up from underneath. Shadows of hills and

mountains; and dry beds of rivers could be seen with great difficulty after craning my neck below the open cockpit and after cleaning up my goggles.

The drift was terriffic. We were literally being blown sideways. I had altered course by 10° degrees to the right in order to counteract a colossal drift to the left. Never have a herd of buffaloes stuck together closer in a jungle after smelling danger from the approach of a Royal Bengal tiger, and never have a flock of swans stuck more tightly to each other, in a flight through a terrific rain and thunder storm, as Majumdar, Habeeb, Ravi and Wing Commander Horsley were sticking to me in this sand storm. As clouds of sand and dust whirled past us in flight, I checked my times of dead reckoning. In ten minutes I was to cross a metre guage railway line. Over and over again I craned my neck out and below the cockpit. There were only dark, and dismal stretches of barren sand below me. Then suddenly when hope was becoming scarce, a meter guage railway line passed below me. Hurrah ! Now in another ten minutes according to my calculations I should pass the main meter guage railway line from Luni junction to Jodhpur. Drift was decreasing, but the horizontal visibility was still zero. I could only see the shape of things vertically below me. Then in exactly ten minutes I cut the meter guage which runs from Luni Junction to Jodhpur. We had struck luck after all. I came down to two thousand feet, and followed the railway line to Jodhpur. Over the aerodrome I signalled to the senior officer, Wing Commander Horsley to land. He broke off from the formation. We all landed one by one. It still remains a mystery to me how no one mentioned a word about this ordeal till nearly one month later when Wing Commander Horsley related our wonderful experience in a dinner party, at Ambala.

At the end of February we got down to strenuous ground work with morse keys and buzzers etc. in order to polish up artillery procedures for all types of impromptu shoots, prearranged shoots, fleeting targets and other calls for concentration of fire from any or all of the batteries concentrated in a certain area. These were the special Code calls which had a tremendous importance in modern warfare. Our speed of buzzing, both receiving

and transmitting was such that even the wireless Operators used to marvel. From the days of Old Sarum and the school of army cooperation we had worked the morse key so much in the pilots cockpit that we were almost upto the standard of a Wireless Operator as far as transmitting and receiving of W/T messages was concerned. A poor A.C. pilot was supposed to be bit of everything. Bit of a fighter boy. Bit of a night fighter; torpedoe bomber; navigator; wireless operator; air gunner, glorified clerk; tinker, tailor soldier sailor and last but not the least an officer and a gentleman.

On third of March we set sail once again for Poona, where we were to cooperate with an army Liason officers course under training and further to cooperate with the Poona artillery brigade under Brigadier Beresford Pearse. Poona artillery brigade were carrying out a full ten days live shooting programme with some of the more modern field guns.

It was again 'A' flight No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. Under my command to proceed to Poona. Mukerjee as adjutant of No. 1 Squadron came to see us off. I had selected the route via Jodhpur and Ahmadabad to Poona, with a night stop at Jodhpur. Three of the aircraft were fitted up with T32 wireless sets for Artillery shooting and one carried an electrically operated modern camera which could be fitted vertically in the floor of the rear cockpit and could be swung to an oblique position for taking side overlaps and pin points. Each aircraft carried huge luggage racks and as far as I remember two front Vickers machine guns and universal type of bomb carriers in case the army wanted a demonstration of front gun attacks on a live target or dive and level bombing.

At Jodhpur, once again our worthy friend Rao Raja Narpat Singh and his son met us at the aerodrome and took us to the state hotel for lunch. There was a temptation to stay in the State hotel for the night but duty was duty and we had to push off to Ahmadabad Cantonment where arrangements were made by the S.S.O. (Station Staff Officer) for us to stay at the Dak Bungalow for the night.

At Jodhpur our good friend Gurcharan Singh of Burmah Shell, arranged to fill up our aircraft with

aviation fuel and oil. He also took us for lunch to his house. On several occasions Gurcharan produced first class food when our flight passed through, Jodhpur. He like all other Indians used to take a tremendous pride in the Indian Air Force.

After lunch we took off for Ahmadabad. Once again I made three runs over the old Fort Jodhpur and asked Ravi to take a picture of the flight formation with myself as leader, Majum as No. 2 and Habeeb as No. 3 After finishing our photography over the old fort Jodhpur; I set course for Ahmedabad and in due time passed over Mount Abu. What a picturesque place it looked from the air! There is a large beautiful blue lake on top of a hill about 8,000 feet above sea level. There are hundreds of red roofed buildings surrounded by tall trees and vast stretches of grass. From the air it appeared to be a fairy land, a Shangrila where Human beings could live for ever. The scene was so infatuating that I did a close circuit over Mount Abu and signalled to Ravi Singh to take a picture of the formation.

When we reached Ahmadabad, we found a British S.S.O. (Station Staff Officer) Waiting for us. We spent a busy hour in refuelling and picketing our aircraft. Ahmadabad aerodrome was nowhere the same as it is now. There was a long strip of grassy land available for landing. Petrol was brought by the R.A.S.C. in two gallon drums. Sufficient quantities of oil were also brought. After helping our airmen; I think it was Mahboob, Ramsingh, Mitra and Mukerjee and after covering up all propellars, cockpits, wheels and engines with the proper green canvas covers we drove down to the Dak Bungalow which was not very far from the landing ground. The airmen were taken to the Signals lines. We took our thick woolen stockings off and removed the shoes. We sat on the cemented steps of the Dak Bungalow leading upto our room. A bearer brought some tea and cakes and placed it on the steps. An aviator after a hot cup of tea is almost in the seventh Heaven especially when he is very much tired after a day's busy programme.

There was a thick clump of big trees just outside the Dak bungalow. These trees were full of large monkeys (langoor) with a black face, greyish body and long tail.

Like little children we teased these langoors. It is really amazing how very childish a bunch of young Air Force pilots can be. I threw a stone at one langoor. He did not appreciate my effort at all and made all kinds of faces and noises. In the end the langoors were so utterly fed up with us that they were hurriedly climbing into upper branches and en-mass making dirty faces at us. This was not a good sign. A monkey and especially a langoor can be quite revengeful. There have been some grim stories from the countryside when a man was attacked by two or three monkeys when fast asleep. They can bite hard and do a tremendous amount of damage to the neck or the head. It was quite warm at Ahmadabad during March. We had to sleep at night with the doors open. So we decided not to annoy the langoors any more in case one or two decided to retaliate when we were asleep.

Next morning we got up early. An army staff car brought us down to the landing ground. Our airmen, as usual had got the aircraft ready. After tying up the bed rolls into the luggage racks, aircraft were started up, We took off singly. I was the last to take off. They joined up one by one. We did a left hand turn and came over the landing ground in close formation. Within five minutes we spread out to a respectable distance and then set sail for Poona. We passed very interesting country around Goa and Surat. Bombay looked beautiful from the air. Ravi Singh tried one or more shots at oblique photography of the formation over Taj Mahal Hotel. I am not sure of the result of Ravi Singh's photography. Actually with all four aircraft moving, it was exceedingly difficult to bring the Taj Mahal hotel into the background. Ravi did produce a picture but the tail end of a fishing boat off Ballard Pier appeared in the foreground, super imposed on three Wapitis in close formation. This picture could not be presented to No. 1 Squadron as a Christmas postcard. I wish I had asked Majum or Habeeb to take the pictures and kept Ravi with me tucked into the formation. It should have been a proud possession of the Indian Air Force today when Wapitis cannot be seen even in a picture postcard in the British war and science museums at Kensington. When we developed the photographs at

Poona in our own photographic tent, I felt like taking the detachable control stick from the rear seat of J9751 and fixing up Ravi, but the blighter had peeped into the photographic tent before I could get a chance and had disappeared in a taxi to the cinema in town. Half a bunder boat appeared in one and half a gate of the old historic fort of Jodhpur appeared in the other photograph. Corner of mount Abu appeared in the third. Actually it was not Ravi's fault. With four aircraft moving; a terrific relative velocity is set in and a third object on the ground is almost sure to be missed unless a tremendous length of film is wasted by switching on the camera miles before hand and well after the object is passed.

At Poona. Narender had once again turned up with the ground party. Our tents were pitched. Flight stores, flight office flight commander's office etc. were fixed. Photographic tent and the dark room was the best of the lot. Officers mess consisted of two G.P. tents. We were nicely settled; thanks to Narender's hard work. Once again he came up to me with a broad grin "With your permission, Sir, I have asked a few dames to dinner tonight in our mess. Would you care to join us in pictures tonight"? and then he laughed out loudly and bent forward with terrific mirth.

In the evening we were thinking of calling on the Commandant of he Intelligence school, Colonel Majendy. We were having tea when Colonel Majendy and his British Adjutant Captain, turned up at the landing ground. They joined us in a cup of tea. They had brought large maps of the recce area for the I.L. course and asked if a trip could be arranged. I informed Colonel Majendy that our orders were to be at the disposal of the I.L. school till the termination of the I.L. course when I was to switch over and report to Brigadier Beresford Pearse for artillery shooting with his brigade. "We shall be too pleased to fly you at any minute but at present the airmen are engaged in checking up and tuning the wireless sets. One or two engines are also due for a periodic check and renewing of engine oil etc. I would very much appreciate if tomorrow morning is given to me to have these periodic inspections and tuning up of wireless sets and setting up of a ground station completed".

There upon Col. Majendy asked if tomorrow evening would do. This was agreed to.

Next day our airmen worked like busy bees. We completed two 120 hrs. inspection, cleaning and tuning up of wireless sets and setting up of a ground station by 2 P.M. Everyone had a late lunch. After lunch, Majumdar and I tested two of the aircraft which had completed 120 hrs inspection. By 4 P.M. all aircraft were parked to the left of the tents. These looked really beautiful. At 4.15 Colonel Majendy and his adjutant arrived. Colonel Majendy flew with me and his adjutant with F/O Majumdar. Habeeb and Ravi carried two airmen. We took off singly. The landing ground was a grassy T shaped strip about 600 yards by 400 yards. It was extremely uneven. It would be impossible to land a modern fast aircraf of today on such an aerodrome. We joined up in formation after take off and flew towards the recce area. Colonel Majendy did all the navigation. We passed over some beautiful forts built on top of hills. These were reminiscent of the days of Shiva Jee's struggle against emperor Aurangzeb. There is a beautiful countryside around Poona, a typicial tiger country but unfortunately the tiger has become very scarce around these parts. We returned to Poona when Colonel Majendy got tired of reconnaissance and leaning over the side of the rear cockpit. Over Poona I moved the formation in echelon to the left and signalled to commence break off from the extreme left. Ravi peeled off, then Habeeb, then Majum and finally I.

A hot cup of tea was kept ready by the mess bearers. O.C. intelligence school was pleased that the students will have a wounderful chance of completing their recce reports when a full brigade will take cover in a river during the organised scheme.

The old legend of an army colonel shooting a Tigaa in Poonaa with a beer bottle was a very popular story with us in Miranshah. Hebeeb used to roar with laughter when someone would shoot a line about somthing and he would chip in. "This fellow has been shooting a Tigaa in Poonaa" and then everyone would join in the loud laughter.

When we were having tea, I asked Colonel Majendy if he had shot any tigers since his arrival in Poona.

He laughed aloud and said that he had done no tigershooting in Poona. Everyone laughed. Actually this question was a little embarrassing for Colonel Majendy because in the Indian army this story was a great legend. I had not intentionally asked a peculiar question but somehow unknowingly this came up to my mind.

I.L. course was progressing exceedingly well. Flying experience and an actual tactical reconnaissance was in the final stages of the course.

On the 1st day a batch of about sixteen army officers came along for flying experience. By turns we gave them an air experience. Next day a second batch of fifteen officers turned up and we flew them by turns. Then followed days of road and rail reconnaissance where students had to fill in their own reports and drop these in coloured message bags on a dropping statoin at the aerodrome when an appropriate ground signal was displayed and two or three army troops were placed to pick up messages.

Finally a big tactical excercise was organised in which a full brigade with all supporting arms like field guns and medium machine guns went, into cover under the banks of a big dry river. There were some hills on the banks of the river. There were also tall trees and thick bushes along the banks and sides of the river. This was an ideal country for hiding. Camouflage nets used over guns and vehicles and tanks were perfect. Guns could never have been spotted from the air if the Indian army did not use so much brasso on the muzzle portions. Shining metallic parts from the army equipment throw up a terrific reflection of the sun's rays into the eyes of pilots. A little help was given by us to locate some of the bigger things, other-wise the army officers completed their own recce reports which were placed in a message bag and dropped on the dropping station at the aerodrome. Signal for drop was also given by the pilot, who dropped his hand to the side of the cockpit when a message had to be dropped.

In this I.L. course one or two Indian officers developed a liking for the I·A.F. and volunteered to be seconded to us. Abdul Ali of the third Cavalry was one. Eventually he joind the F.T.S. (Flying Training School) in Ambala during 1940. Abdul Ali, Jaswant Singh, and Naranjan

Prasad all came from the army and joined the F.T.S. in 1940. Abddl Ali was a very interesting person. He was supposed to possess the biggest pet snake out of all the R.A.F. and I.A.F. personnel at Ambala. There were atleast three thousand officers and personnel atthe Air Force station Amabala and it wasby no chance a mean achievement to possess the biggest snake out of 3,000 British and Indians officer and men. During interesting stag parties, Ali was requested to produce his pet snake. The blighter used to bring it curled up between the palms of his two hands. On removing the top hand, the snake used to spring forward to a terific length. Therupon there used to be thunderous laughter from everyone. He was fond of polo but was an average player. He was always nervous of his blackmare Bijli (Black lightening), and used to say "Bijli will kill me one of these days", The same thing happened. One day in a friendly game of polo against the gunners, in a fast chukker, Bijli threw Ali down and put a hoof on his head in full view of all the spectators including ladies. There were quite a number of screams from ladies when they saw Bijli's performance. Poor Ali was killed on the spot. I.A.F. lost a fine sportsman and a jovial pilot who would have been a great asset to us. Sadly Bijli followed the funeral procession upto the grave yard.

On the termination of the I.L. course we switched over to the gunner's brigade who were camping out/in the open. As usual I carried out the first shoot which was a success. Then in turns Majum, Habeeb, and Ravi had a crack at the targets. These guns wer new but somehow we felt that the shooting at Bangalore was far superior to the one at Poona. Probably it was due to the fact that British units at Poona received these new guns only recently and had not fully calibrated these; nor were they fairly conversant with the new tables, gadgets and graphs, and procedures. However, in each air shoot the guns got to within about hundred or fifty yards but not within four shots as was the case with the Indian artillery at Bangalore.

During conferences, the Brigade Commander, Brigadier Beresford Pearse used to give terrific raspberries to the gunner officers. Very seldom have I heard a phrase in a gunner conference where about two hundred officers were present "The procedure was wrong. Guns

were wrongly placed and the entire shooting was a failure. From a tactical point of view the entire exercise was a wash out". There used to be dead silence when the Brigadier spoke. Brigadier Beresford Pears was one of the ablest British gunners in the territory of India. As a gunner nobody could touch him throughout the length and breadth of the country. In 1941 the same Beresford Pearse was promoted to the rank of a Major General and commanded the famous 4th Indian Division in the Western desert of Africa against the combined German and Italian forces. Thank God, he was not annoyed with our observations from the air. In fact he was quite pleased with the air cooperation and gave us a first class chit for Air Head Quarters.

One day it was my turn to carry out three consecutive shoots with the gunners. First two went off very well indeed but for the love of mike during the third shoot I could not locate the target which was marked by three white crosses spread on the ground. I always considered myself to be a king pin as far as artillery shooting was concerned. Today I was in a tight jam and could not locate the third target. The time was getting on to send the pin points down to the guns. Round and round the target area I wandered, but there was no joy, no dice.

Suddenly my wireless Operator tapped me on the back. I looked round to see Majum formating on me closely. In disappointment I put my hand up showing three fingers and talked to him in the dumb language. What I meant was "Brother I am sunk, I cannot locate the third target". There was a broad grin on Majum's face. His three fingers immediately came out. He repeatedly pointed his right hand fore finger towards himself to say "Don't worry, brother. I have got it taped." Then Majum put both thumbs up "O.K.-O.K". He branched off from me. I immediately saw his aerial being wound out. Within seconds Majum was tapping away his key in sending the coordinates of the target to the guns.

I was so browned off with target No. 3 that I came straight home and had a cold lemonade. Within an hour Majumdar's aircraft appeared over the landing ground and came in to land. He was beaming with a big smile "By God-Zaidy, today is the first day that I have seen you

with your pants down in artillery shooting. Generally we come up to you for help." Such were the days of brotherly help and cooperation within a flight of the Indian Air Force.

Majnmdar' s pretty cousin turned up from Bombay. She was staying in a hotel in poona and used to visit the aerodrome regularly. This provided some change from the monotony of tented life. A few other girl friends joined up from Poona and we went to tea in a restaurant located in the centre of the city.

Habeeb and I visited Municipal gardens on a Sunday morning. T ese gardens were really wonderful. After looking at the beautiful flowers I told Habeeb that it was due to such inspirations that tales of Damayanti and the Swan had been originated from a land around Poona. It is amazing how foolish and childish even grown up military pilots can be. We sat there on a bench by the side of a pool of water containing a lavish array of lotus flowers. A few coloured fish floated in and out of the lotus leaves on that sweet scented spring morning. A pilot's body is always electrified after going through so many clouds containing a high electric potential. Even the friction of air and ozone at high altitudes continuously producing friction on a pilot in an open cockpit, electrifies him. When I think of those bygone days, I am amazed at how foolish we used to be at the age of a flying officer and a flight lieutenant The two of us laughed and laughed and the funny thing was that there was nothing to laugh about.

When we returned back to the landing ground we had lunch together. Then Majumdar and his pretty cousin turned up. We made up a party of a few officers and wives from the army also and went to the river side for boating. We spent a most pleasant afternoon on the river, One of the Indian army officers who was attached to us as an I.L.O. (Intelligence Liason Officer) and his good looking wife gave a demonstration of good swimming. They jumped from the boat into the river after changing into a swim suite. This was really enjoyable. I felt like diving into the river and got ready to take my clothes off but I had no swim suite with me and jumping into the river in a blue pair of under pants did not appeal to me especially in the presence of ladies in the two rowing boats we had.

On 20th of March 1939 we took off on the return flight to Ambala on the successful conclusion of our cooperation with the I.L. Course and Poona Brigade. On the previous day we had said good bye to Brigadier Beresford Pearse and other senior officers of the army. Our ground party had already left by train. On our departure, only a few tents and ravens remained to gaze into the empty space and feel sorry for not getting dog's biscuits which were given to us as field rations, and which we invariably threw to the ravens and pye dogs collecting outside our mess tent.

Once again we flew over the city of Poona in close formation. Then we opened out and set course for Ahmadabad via Bombay. We flew at a height of 1,000 feet over Ballard Pier, and the sea front opposite to the Taj Mahal hotel. There was a tremendous temptation of beating up the sea front but as a Flight Commander one has considerable amount of responsiblity resting on ones shoulders. A trunk telephone call to Air H.Q. from Bombay or a personal letter from Admiral Sir Fitzherbert Flag- Officer Commanding the Royal Indian Navy addressed to Air Marshal Sir Joubert-De-La-Ferte at A.H.Q. New Delhi would really have put me on the mat. On many an occasion Ravi's low flying over cities and selected places in order to wave to a pretty popsy poking her head out of a window put me on the mat as I was the flight Commander. I shall describe an occasion, when I was called up to Air H.Q. in Simla with a view to collecting a raspberry from Air Commodore Whistler who was acting as A.O.C-in-C Air Forces India during June 1939 when Air Marshal Sir Joubert-De-La Ferte was away on leave.

On this occasion my beloved friend F/O Ravinder Hari Darshan Singh had been doing excessive low flying over the Maharaja's palace in the Punjab States and had been waving out to lots of pretty faces peeping out of windows of the palace. I shall describe this episode later. Also in January 1940 I got the most phenomenal raspberry from Group Captain Milne O.C. Aircraft Depot R.A.F. Drigh Road. On this occasion also when 'A' flight was stationed at Drigh Road for coast defence duties and cooperation with the Royal Indian Navy during the seeond world war; Ravi in the light of the

full moon was doing lowflying over a Popsy's house in Clifton when Milne was having dinner in a friend's house next door. Unfortunately at the same time I was returning back after a two hours anti-submarine and anti-surface raider patrol in cooperation with H.M.I.S. St. Anthony and Sophie Marie. Clifton being on the way back home to Drigh Road, is generally visited by every aircraft returning back home. At the same time as Ravi was showing off to a popsy around the Mary Road Colony, I passed over Clifton bridge at an altitude of 500 feet, and straight run back home. I was amazed when next morning I collected a rocket and an imperial raspberry from Group Captain Milne who had checked up the fiying log and concluded that it must be the Flight Commander. Habeeb was furious with Ravi and P/O Goyal who knew a popsy near the Clifton bridge. Some one had informed him that the poor Flight Commander got a raspberry for no reason. When I came back to the hanger situated across the main, aerodrome, I found a terrific argument going on in the Pilot's room between Habeeb and Ravi. I cut that argument out with a smile otherwise it would have developed into an inter-communal debate as Burhan and Janjua were coming in on Habeeb's support. Goyal was coming to Ravi's help. Nanda was standing neutral with a laugh and Mehar Singh had just commenced to tickle his beard which was a sign that in any case he was going to jump to the support of his Flight Commander.

Throughout the history of the Indian Air Force, low flying and showing off has played an awful havoc with the lives of Indian pilots In 1943 Gajinder Singh was killed at Risalpur doing low aerobatics and showing off. Kartar Singh was killed at Campbell-Pur in the same way. In 1941 F/O Raza led a flight of Hurricanes so low in a demonstration for the Nawab of Bhopal at Bangalore aerodrome that one of the boys, P/O Raghunath hit a wireless mast and was knocked out of the sky. I requested Ravi to discontinue low flying as I was fed up with collecting raspberries on his behalf.

After a night stop at Ahmedabad we returned to Ambala via Jodhpur. Mukerjee as usual was standing on the tarmac with a broad smile. A big crowd of airmen

had also collected to welcome their heroes, Indian Aviators of the I.A.F. F/O's Janjua, Burhanuddin and Atam Nanda had completed their training at Abu Suir and had joined us at Ambala with their beautiful wings pinned on to their army jackets. P/O Surjit Majithia and P/O Rup Chand had also returned from the R.A.F. F.T.S. at Habaniyya They had obtained wings also. How wonderful! This was all due to Wing Commander Bussell's help at A.H.Q.

We were informed that 'B' flight under the command of Aspee Engineer had been posted to Miranshah and 'C' flight with a few officers and men were posted to Fort Sandeman. There had been trouble on the Frontier Again. No. 20 Squadron R.A.F. Peshawar had also sent a flight down to Miranshah.

In Ambala all the best bungalows were occupied by married Indian officers of the Air Force. Now it was my turn to get married. My girl was waiting for me at Peshawar. I took fifteen days leave on the 1st of April 39 and proceeded to Peshawar by car in order to get married. The marriage ceremony misfired on the first occasion as Is always the custom on the North West Frontier. There was a hitch on the writing down and registration of a marriage bond including the writing down of Haq Mahir etc. My people objected very strongly. We were almost pulling out revolvers and daggers against the other party but eventually everything worked out beautifully as the girl had sincerely promised to marry me. The marriage was celeberated with all the pomp and glory of a typical Fronier marriage. The late ruler of Chitral was invited as the guest of honour. The Mullah read the Nikah ceremony and a terrific feast followed. Half way through the ceremony there was a roar of two Wapiti aircraft in formation overhead and within ten minutes Aspee and Rungie burst into the marriage party with their flying Sydcoats and furlined flying boots. Rungie had come down from Fort Sandeman to Miranshah to discuss an important bombing proposition with Aspee when both 'B' and 'C' flights were to carry out a coordinated bombing of a certain proscribed area of the Madda Khels. At Miranshah Aspee had learnt through a political officer who came from my home town of D.I.K. that I was getting married at

Peshawar on that day i.e. 13th April 1939 at 5 P.M. There upon they decided to fly out to Peshawarr to take part in the wedding and also collect some new maps, from H.Q. No. 223 Group R.A.F. This was a good pretext.

The Pathan mullah with a terrific flowing grey beard and a large turban was reciting the holy Koran. I was sitting by his side with my head and face covered with garlands of flowers, pretending to be a very bashful type of a guy, but in my heart of hearts I was hoping for the party to break up soon. In came two intrepid aviators of the Indian Air Force, clad in Sydcoats and flying boots; banging away at the door. When I heard their voice I peeped through the overhanging garlands covering my face. Then I heard Rungie's voice asking a guest in the party in a loud tone "Where is Zaidy?" Almost everyone looked up as this was interrupting the holy recitations of the Mullah. Some one pointed towards me hidden up behind garlands. I looked towards Aspee and Rungie. Rungie's face was red and his eyes were very sharp,. I was cretain that Rungie had been at the bottle again at Fort Sandeman and Miranshah. I almost shivered in my pants. I was certain that with these two intrepid aviators there would be hell to pay in a marriage party. Rungie said very loudly pointing a finger at me with a loud laugh and opening his mouth wide "You, old devil, Zaidy-you thought you could get married without informing us, didn't you. Well-we have caught you up, haven't we? and fancy all the way from Sandeman and Miranshah-coming at full throttle; Good show-old boy! Let us have a spot of good artillery cooperation tonight. Where is the bride"? and they both looked round in all directions. Then there was a terific laughter from Rungie and a subdued giggle from Aspee. "For God's sake sit down and be a moral support. The bride is upstairs with tbe women folk. This is a Frontier wedding The dames don't mix up with the guys". I said to them.

This was an interruption in the recitation from the holy Koran. But the Pathan priest was a liberal minded type of a fellow; knowing fully well that the two intrepid aviators were comrades of the bridegroom. My father-in-law stood up and shook hands with Aspee and Rungie and guided them to a respectable seat.

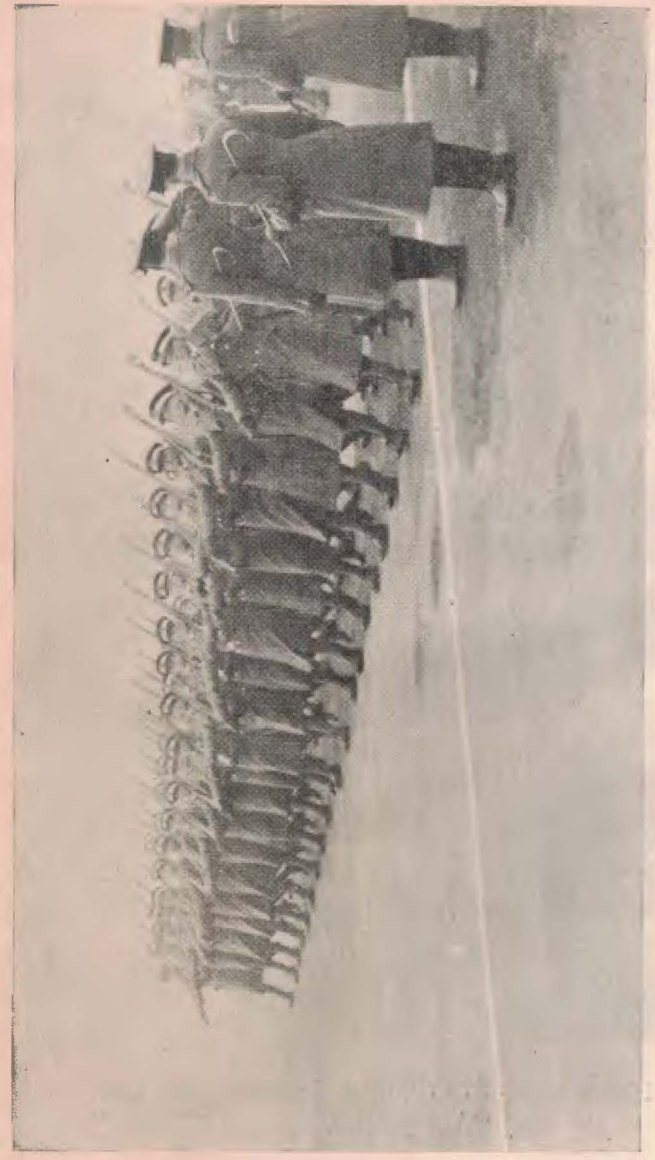
After the Nikah ceremony, tea and cakes were served to all the guests. The place was full of Indian sweets but no one could eat so much. After a late tea when all the guests had disappeared I introduced Aspee, and Rungie to my wife. Then we drove down to the R.A.F. mess. I and my wife waited in the ladies room or the blue room of the officers mess. Aspee and Rungie changed into dinner jackets. We drove back to my Father-in-law's house and had dinner together. Lt. Hayauddin of the Sikh regiment had also come tosee me and joined us in dinner. After dinner I left them at the R.A.F. officers mess. Next morning Aspee and Rungie had flown away before the crack of dawn. I heard the roar of two Wapitis when I was still in bed. What a difference in the life of a pilot on holiday and wedlock and those on the job in Waziristan!

Five days later I and my wife arrived at Ambala by train. Lads of the village had gathered at the Cantonment railway station. What a reception we got! Mukerjee, Majumdar, Narander, Habeeb, Ravi and Majumdar's brother, an officer from the 16th Cavalry were present at the railway station. They, all threw their hats at me and then came and carried me away from the 1st Class compartment, amidst terrific laughter. They dropped me on the floor. This was very embarrassing for my young wife and old mother-in-law. They got used to the I.A.F. customs later on. These customs were unique.

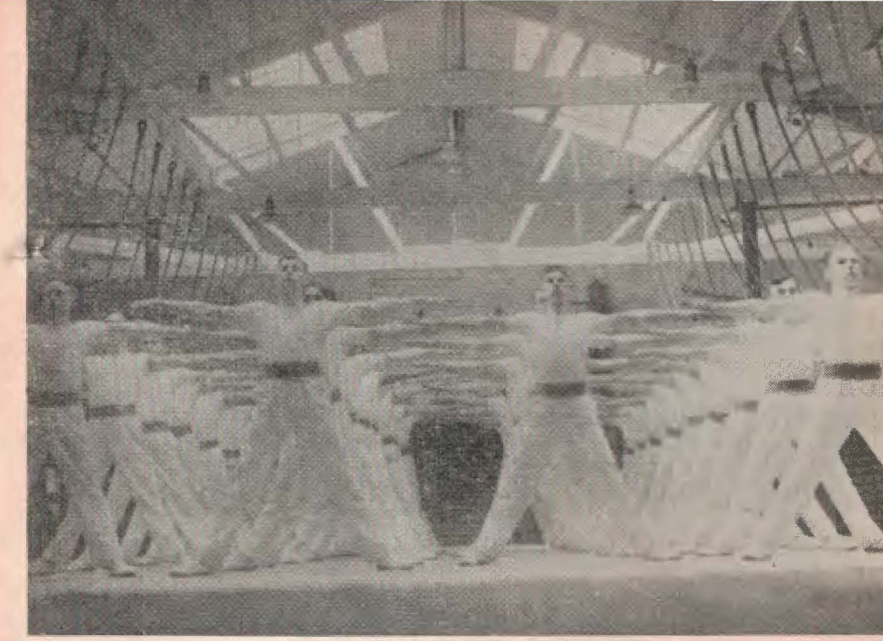
Wing Commander Horsley out of love for the I.A.F. had allocated the best bungalow No. 39 to me and my wife. It was situated on the Mall and had a lovely garden. My wife had arranged beautiful furniture, crockery and cutlery. We asked many of our Indian and British friends to dinner at our house. Every evening a game of Hockey or mixed Tennis was most enjoyable at the mess. Jaya, Rubie, Brijender, Taj, and Saeeda used to enjoy their knitting parties and morning coffee in each other's houses by rotation. Husbands had to pay the bills at the end of the month.

Early in May, orders were received from Air H.Q. New Delhi. Mukerjee and I had been promoted to the substantive ranks of Flight Lieutenants from the same date. Mukerjee took over Command of No. 1

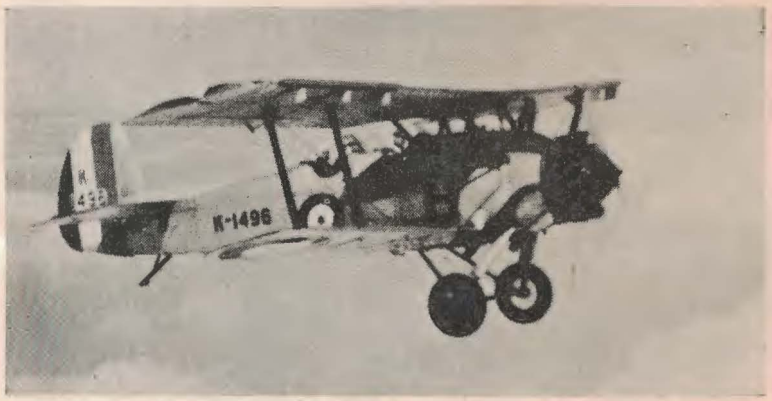
Daily parade at R. A. F. College Cranwell, 1930—31.
'A' Squadron



R. A. F. College passing out parade. Dec. 1931. Air Marshal Sir John Salmond taking the Salute. Commandant R. A. F. College, Air Vice Marshal Longmore is to his right.



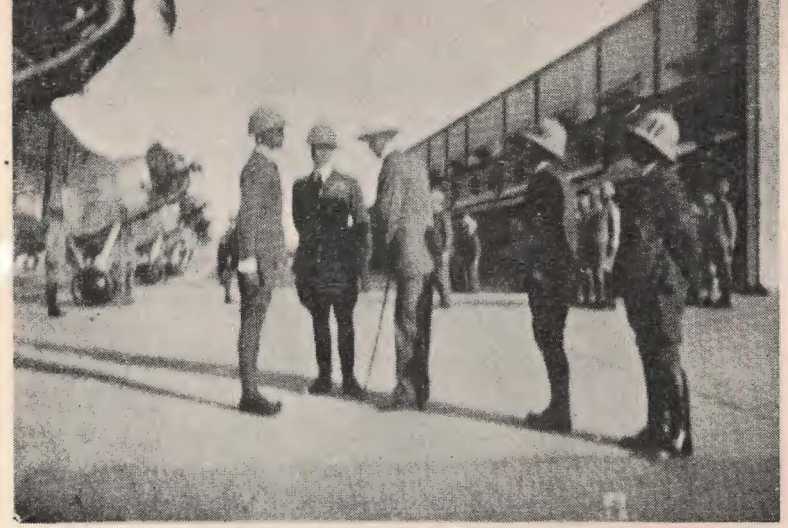
Flight Cadets in P.T. Gymnasium. R.A.F. College Cranwell 1931.
Front four.
No. 1 Kiwi Bronghton No. 2 Mitchel
No. 3 No. 4 Jumbo Moreton.



An Armstrong Whitworth Atlas over Cranwell. 1931 - 32.

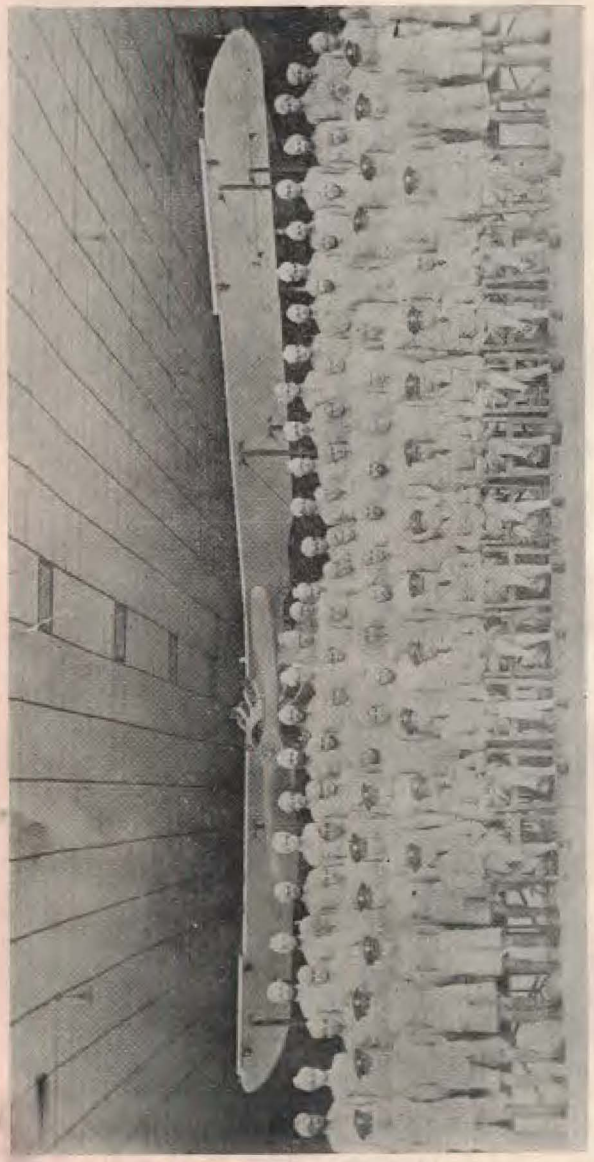
Gandhi Hill, home of the first six Indian Officers
May 1933. Drigh Road Sind.

Flight Lieutenant Bouchier and Naik Ram Singh, leaving
Quetta Aerodrome in Golden Eagle Wapiti K1290
for Drigh Road. October 1933.

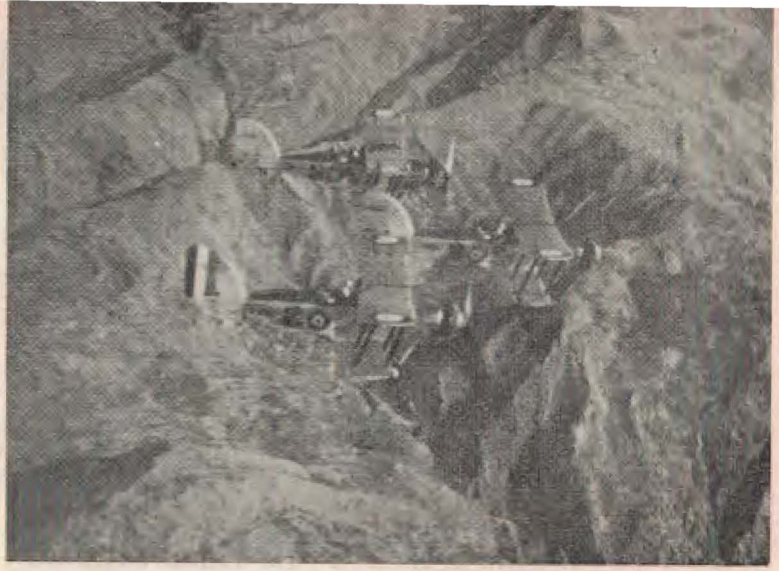


Inspection of I. A. F. by Lord Londonderry Secretary of
State for Air — 1934, at Drigh Road, Sind.
Lord Londonderry is accompanied by Sir John Steele
A.O.C-in-C India, S/L Norton and Willie Whitelock
Station Commander.

Sir Philip Chetwode c-in-c India inspecting I. A. F,
accompanied by F/LT. Bouchier. Drigh Road 1934.



'A' Flight No. 1 Sqdn I. A. F. Drigh Road, Equipped with Westland Wapitis. Front row Left to right. W/o Newing, P/o Narendra, F/o Engineer, F/o Mukerjee, F/o Haynes, F/lt Bouchier, F/o Sircar, F/o Awan, P/o Majumdar, P/o Daljit Singh, F/sgt Hill. January 1934.



Wapitis flown by Philip Haynes, Mukerjee and Aspee, over Murree Hills - November 1936. Picture taken by Author from a fourth Wapiti.

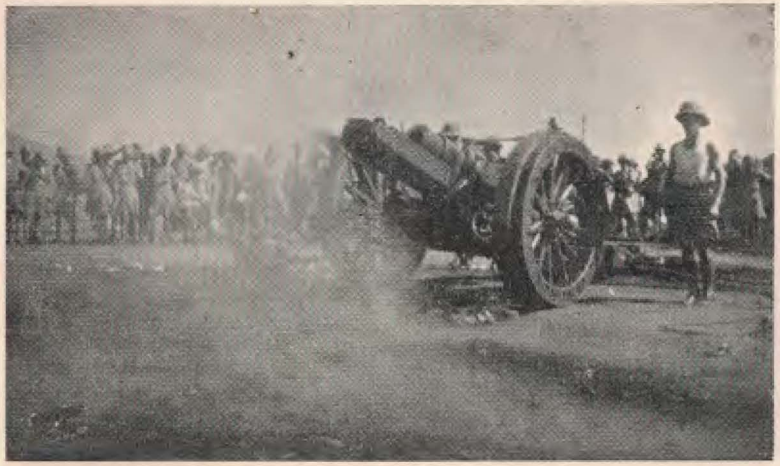
Wazir and Mahsud tribesmen assembling at Razmak for a Jirga to be addressed by the British Political Resident in Waziristan. Early 1937.
Thousands of armed men with the latest types of foreign rifles.

A second Jirga of tribal Maliks being addressed indoors by the British Resident at Razmak. The British emphatically refused to hand over the Hindu girl Islambibi to her tribal lover. March 1937.

A section of British armoured cars from Bannu escorting an Indian supply convoy to Razmak. A scene reminiscent of the ambush of Shahur Tangi and the famous ballad of 1937, 13. Composed by a Pathan tribal poet.

Bannu Brigade 'Presenting Arms' to Sir Philip Chetwode c-in-c India. Razmak 1936. Brig Maynard is on the left.

Sunrise over Asman Manza Camp—1937 october.



A British 8″ Gun in action at Asman Manza.
October 1937.

11th Sikhs on the March through Waziristan 1937.

A Machine Gun piquet of 11th Sikhs Waziristan 1937.

Returning to Fort Miranshah at the end of a day's close support to Bannu and Razmak brigades September 1937.

A typical tribal village in the Khaisora and Shaktu valleys, located near Fakir of Ipi's home village Arsol Kot and Gulzamir Kot bombed by the R.A.F. in 1937, and later destroyed by Bannu brigade — June 1937.

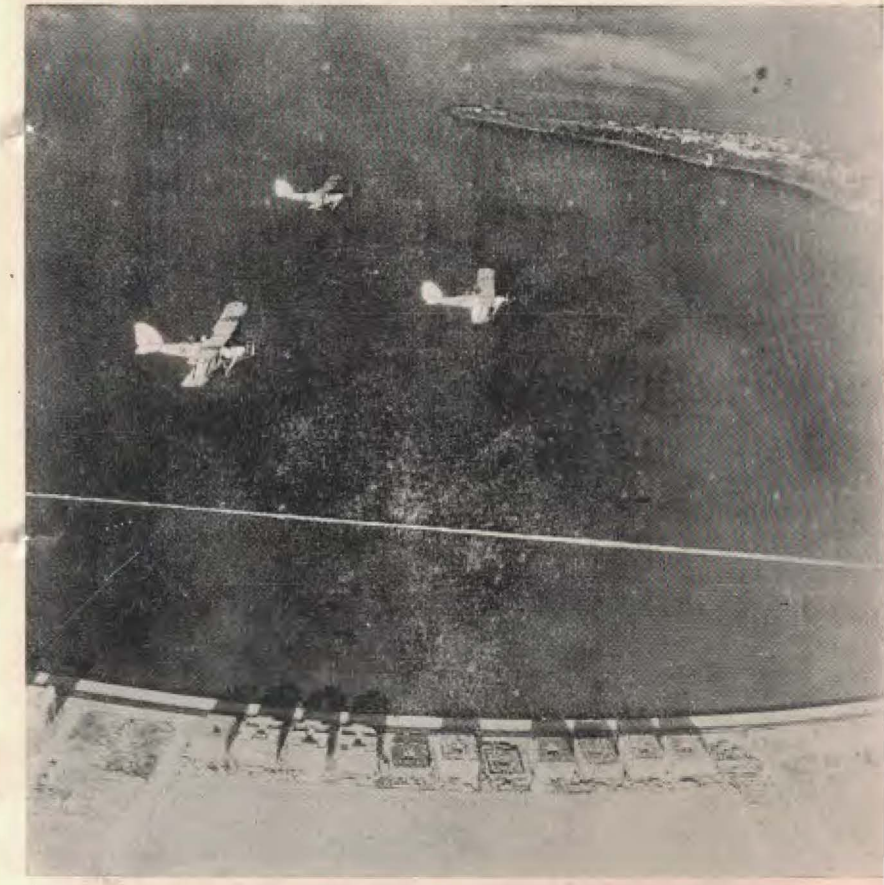
Bannu Brigade on the march for destroying Sher Ali's village Near Wana. October 1937.

Captain Atma Singh 6/13 Frontier Force destroying a tribal outlaw's mud hut in Sherwangi Narai.
Brigadier Atma Singh was Killed by the same Pathans in the battle for Kashmir in 1947.

Artillery Camp at Hyderabad Sind December 1937.
Awan, Runganadan, Mukerjee, Gardner, Majumdar, Bill Jones and Habeeb.

Ambala Brigade Hockey Championship December 1938.

Majumdar's Cousin who Came to see us at Poona Aerodrome March 1939.

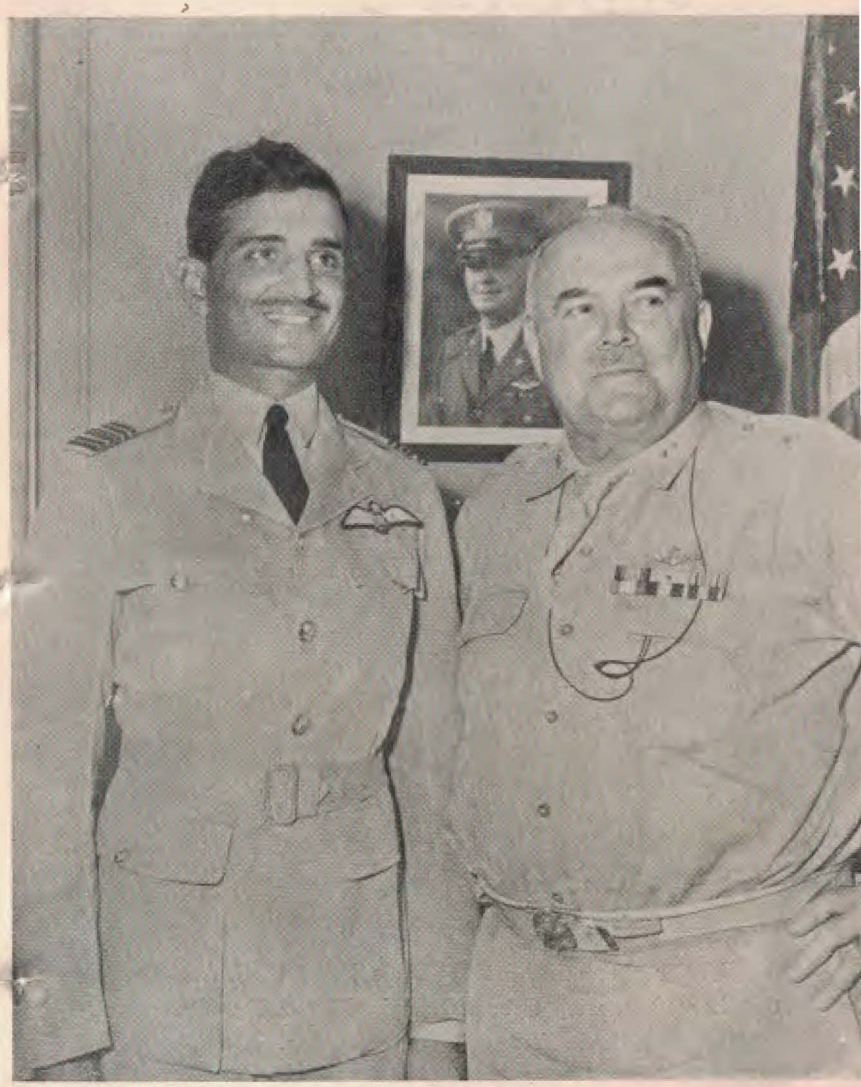


I.A.F. Wapitis in open formation over Bombay and Gateway of India, on return from Poona to Ambala, March 1939.

Flown by F/lt Awan, F/o Majumdar (right) and F/o U. H. Khan (left) Photo by F/o Ravi Singh from a fourth Wapiti.

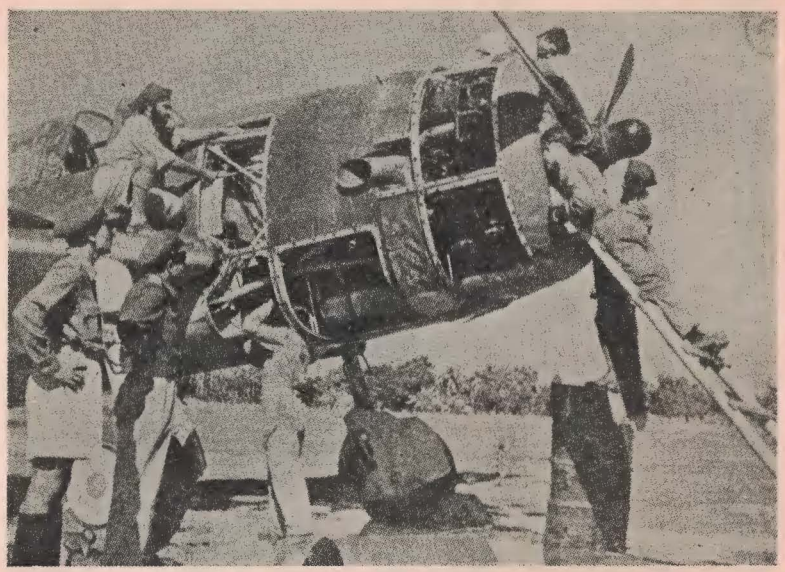
Hawker Hart and Audax fitted with Rolls Royace Kestrel 1 B engine. Standard equipment of I.A.F. from 1939 to 1943.

Six Squadron Leaders of I.A.F., with the Duke of Gloucester at Risalpur. July 1942.
Mehar Singh, Mukerjee, Habeeb, the Duke, Runganadan, Awan, and Majumdar.

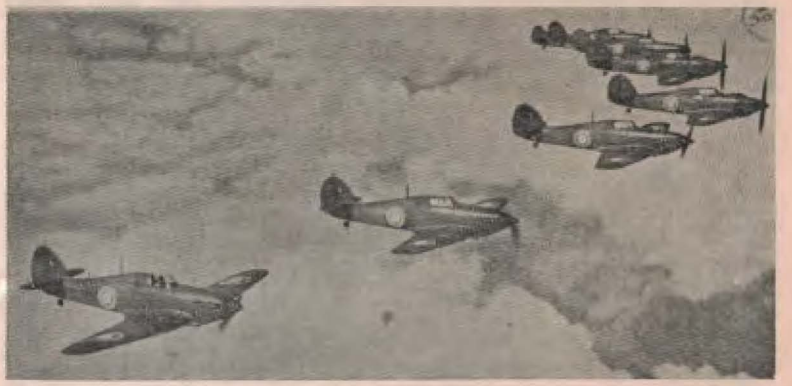


At Randolph Field with the General Offieer Commanding Training Command. September 1943.

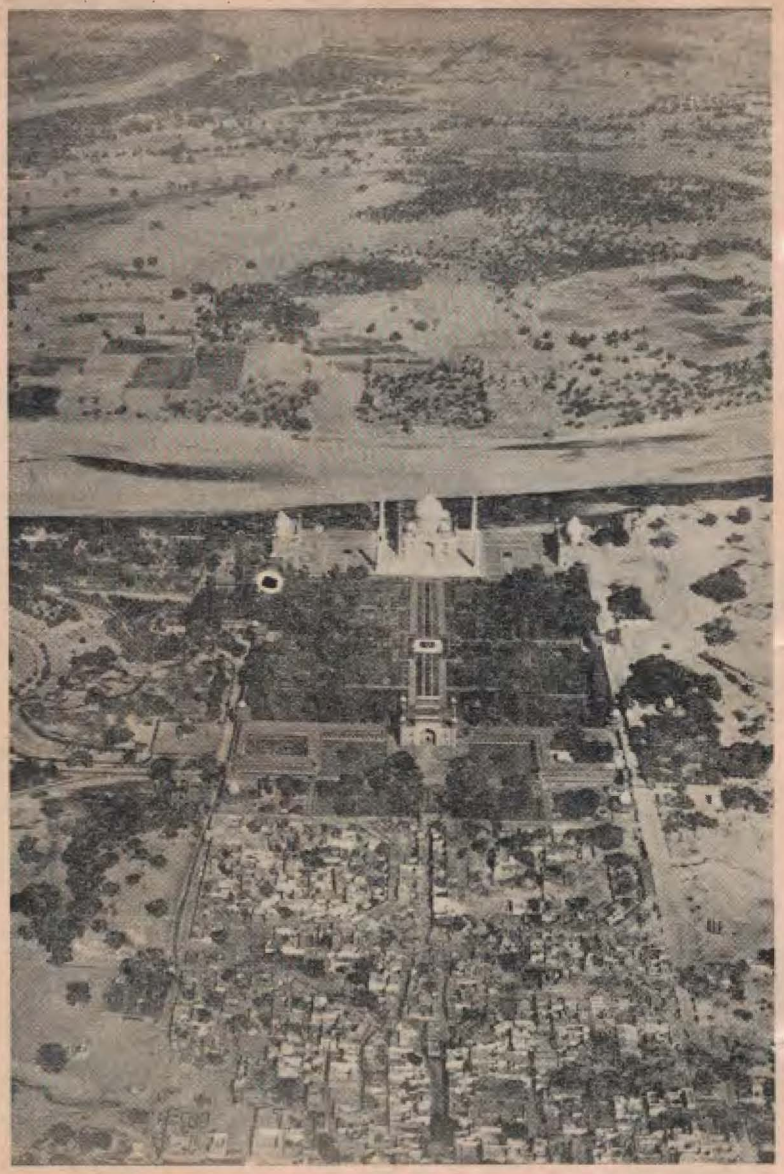
Under three flags at Williams Field U. S. A. October 1943, with Group Captain Hogan Director of R. A. F. training in America.



Daily maintenance on a Vultee Vengeance dive bomber of No. 8 Squadron I. A. F. Arakan January 1944.



No. 6 Squadron I. A. F. Hurricanes. Mehar's Flying Cheetahs Rutnap Arakan 1944.



Taj Mahal Agra teken from a Hurricane flown by S/L Mehar Singh. 1943.

Squadron I.A.F., Narender became the Squadron adjutant. I continued as O.C. 'A' flight. 'B' flight under Aspee was still at Miranshah. Kurun Krishan Majumdar with the rank of a Flying Officer took over Command of 'C' flight. My flight was the seniormost and contained the biggest number of officers, including F/O Habeebullah Khan, F/O Ravinder Singh, F/O Mehar Singh and P/O Goyal. All the other lads were in the 'B' flight including Aspee, Rungie, Surjit Singh, Arjan Singh and Prithipal Singh,—'C' flight consisted of Majumdar, Janjua, Burhanuddin and Atam Nanda. Loppy Henney was our Squadron I.L.O.; Titch Tandon and Panda Nanda were Equipment Officers.

In the month of May 39, we concentrated chiefly on low level bombing and night flying. One night seven of us carried out a night flying trip to Delhi and back. It was a pitch dark night. There were no wireless aids at all. On a moonlit night banks of the river Jumna provide a beautiful aid to navigation. The river after twenty minutes flight from Ambala leads you straight into Delhi. It is incredible how some pilots have gone wrong even in day time when flying between Ambala and New Delhi. Dipie Majithia crossed and recrossed the Jamna river several times on a cross country flight between Ambala and New Delhi during broad dalight when he was a cadet at the F.T.S. Ambala. He could not locate Delhi and eventually fetched up with his nose dug into the sands of river Jumna and the tail sticking up towards the sky.

It was a pitch dark night with seven Wapitis heading towards Delhi. These aircraft were piloted by Mukerjee, Myself. Majumdar, Narender, Habeeb, Ravi and Mehar Singh. F/O Narender was asked to lead. We formed up in a close V formation and made Delhi in one hour. I looked down below and could easily make out the lights of Connaught Circus. Wellingdon Aerodrome's light beacon was also seen at a little distance. We were at about 6,000 feet. A very good formation was maintained even in the pitch dark. We did a circuit round Conaught Place and then set course for Ambala. It was quite tiring to stick in a close formation for two hours. One cannot move into open formation for a little rest due to fear of losing the

leader and the formation in the pitch darkness where every bright star looks like the tail light of an aircraft. A strong head wind had sprung up and we were out by ten minutes from our E.T.A. Actually we had wasted some time over Delhi, which we had not allowed in our calculation. A strong head wind from the North also made our calculations wrong by at least 10-12 minutes. When the E.T.A. came nearer I looked at my watch. There was no sign of the beautifully illuminated town of Ambala. A tall railway flood light from the Cantonment Railway Station which was always picked up by pilots from a distance of at least twenty miles was nowhere to be seen. For a moment my heart beat faster than usual. I commenced to branch off to the right where an illuminated village looked like Ambala on the horizon. Feelings of others were also the same. Majumdar branched off to the left where the head light of an on coming railway locomotive had created an impression of Ambala Search Light on the horizon. The formation stuck to their course. Very soon, having realised our mistake, both Majumdar and I came trotting back to the formation to find that others had crept in our place and there was no other alternative but to stick to the two extreme ends of the formation. Narander's heart beats had gone up by a lot more than anybody else's. It is the duty of the formation leader to steer his courses properly, calculate his D.R. position and pick up pin points and land marks properly in coordination with his map reading. In pitch dark there was no other alternative but to land in an uneven field with potholes and large boulders. If this formation was lost at night; cream of the Indian Air Force would have been written off. We were very happy to see the lights of ambala that night.

One day in May I was carrying out practice low level bombing on a ground target stuated in the bed of a dry river, about eight miles South of Ambala. Loppy Hanney of the Scottish regiment who was our I.L.O. emerged from his office and asked me for a flip. Loppy did not look much of an aviator but was in fact a terrific air hog. After fixing sixteen eight pounder practice bombs to the under wing of my aircraft; Loppy and I disappeared over the horizon. Time was short

and some other pilot was supposed to be carrying out the same exercise after me. I quickly got down to about 200 feet and came in a straight run at the target which was a circle with a radius of 50 yards. As my engine covered the centre of the target, I released a bomb and immediately carried out a steep turn to the left putting my left wing down in a steep bank in order to watch the bomb burst. It was a good shot; well within the white-washed circle. Immediately I saw two lovely black buck in a stiff fight just outside the left hand side of the circle. Their straight long horns were entangled and there was a terrific head on fight. At a little distance stood a beautiful little doe grazing bits of grass and not even bothering about the fight between two gloomy Romeos; all for her love's sake. I pointed it out to Loppy "Look-what is happening". Loppy stood up in the rear cockpit and peered down below. Then he smiled and nodded. I understood his feelings. He muttered something to the effect "Yes-it is the same all over the world. These young dames create all the trouble and then they pretend and appear to be so very innocent".

After dropping the first bomb, I headed straight for home and picked up a second Wapiti which had the front machine guns, all tuned up. I returned back to the bombing range and loaded both the guns. When I returned back to the spot where the two black buck had interlocked their horns in a grim struggle for the survival of the fittest in order to possess the pretty female; there was nothing there. The dame had smelt danger from the zooming aircraft and had trotted off. The two warriors seeing that the subject of war was trotting away, left their grip and trotted off in pursuit.

Summer months were exceedingly nice for night flying. unlike winter; too much botheration is not caused to the poor airmen waiting outside in the cold near the goose neck flares or on the tarmac and the taxying post. Rainy Months of July and August are also bad at Ambala for night flying, as during the monsoon season hundreds of Cobra snakes come out of the grassy aerodrome at Ambala. There were one or two fatal accidents where an airman was bitten by a cobra snake when waiting near the gooseneck flares.

One day during a long distance photographic reconnaissance trip I flew over Dehra Dun and Mussorie. What a beautiful view of the snow covered Himalayan peaks is obtained from the air when flying at a height of about 12,000 feet above sea level over Mussorie! Far away a triangular shaped peak like a clear cut Pyramid presented a beautiful sight. This peak was probably Nanda Devi or Mount Kamet. What a magnificant spectacle of eternal snows is presented by these beautiful peaks and there are any number of them to be seen away to the East if you are flying at a good height above Mussorie. And Mussorie itself is a beautiful hill station. A wealth of Deodar trees and those pretty thousands of red roofed houses make up a dreamland. But you have to be a pilot to admire the extreme beauty of nature in the virgin snows of the Himalayas. As a small kid in a primary school in my home town of D.I.K. we used to recite in the class room when reading the Geography of our motherland. I never thought at the time of chorus singing as a small boy that one day as a grown up young man I shall have the privelege of flying over the virgin snows of the Himalayas.

Throughout the month of June a continuous programme of training was maintained. Aspee's flight had returned back from Miranshah and we were once again a complete squadron with three flights. In the evening a few friendly games of Hockey were arranged against an R.A.F. side or other army units like the R.A.S.C. Punjab Regiment and the mountain artillery training centre. Every evening there used to be light game of Tennis also at the Officer's mess. Officer's wives took a prominent part. Dinner parties were also arranged by rotation. If Ravi and Brijender gave one party, Habeeb and Saeeda would throw a party within the next few days. Then it was my and Taj's turn to throw a party. Then Runganadan and Jaya's turn would come along. What happy days we had at Ambala!

One fine morning Ravi branched off towards Sangrur and flew low ever the Maharaja's palace. He had done this once or twice before and waved to a few pretty faces. One or two senior inmates of the Maharaja of Jind's palace did not like Ravi and asked the A.D.C.

to telephone to A.H.Q. Simla. At this time Air Marshal Sir Joubert De La Ferte was away on leave. Air Commodore Whistler was acting as A.O.C-in-C. Next morning Wing Commander Horsley sent for Me "There has been a telephone call from Air H.Q. that a young pilot has been low flying over the Maharaja of Jind's palace at Sangrur and was seen waving to the purdah ladies. This is a fantastic state of affairs and the A.O.C. wants to give a personal raspberry to you as a Flight Commander and your junior pilot F/O Ravi Singh for not displaying tact and courtsey to a Maharaja's palace. You have also violated King's regulations in carrying out low flying and waving out to some of the pretty faces in the palace. You better run along tomorrow in your car or Ravi's car in full Air Force uniform to collect an A.O.C's raspberry" My face fell immediately. Wing Commander Horsley was a kind hearted old man who was very fond of the Indian Air Force. Seeing the colour of my face and seeing me standing rigidly 'to attention' he smiled gently and said "Look Awan-do not take it to heart. Air Commodore Whistler is a very nice and kind person. His raspberry will not be so terrible as you immagine. Now run along and inform Ravinder Singh and leave early in the morning in order to be at Air H.Q. Simla between 10 and 11 A.M."

When I came back to the hanger and my office in the 'A' flight, I was in a terrible rage. When I could not contain myself any longer, I walked in to the combined pilot's room where Habeeb, Ravi, Narinder, Mehar Singh, Goyal, Arjan, Singh, Prithipal, Atam Nanda, Burhan, and Janjua were sitting doing some work on maps and report writing etc. Everyone was very sorry to hear the news that the Flight Commander and a junior pilot were going to collect an A.O.C'S raspberry. Then there was silence and a little subdued laughter when someone asked weather Ravi had been actually doing low flying and waving to a few pretty faces in the Maharaja's palace. Air force types always laugh it off. Even the worst calamity is taken so calmly,

Next morning in full Air Force uniform Ravi and I left by car and arrived at Air H.Q. Simla at 11-30. Those were the days of the British rule and Air H.Q.

Simla appeared a little difficult type of a place. We reported to the 'P' staff. Wing Commander incharge 'P' staff took us to Air Commodore Whistler's room. A system of red and green lights outside the A.O.C-in-C's office appeared quite frightening. Wherever I went, I stood to attention. We were so nervous that even in the corridor outside the A.O.C-in-C's room we both stood to attention. A.O.C's raspbury was regarded as quite a frightening thing by even the R.A.F. officers. Generally there used to be a short talk or lecture and an invariable 'Get Out' in almost a shout thrown in at the poor officer before he made an exit.

The green light came one. Some one opened the door. Then an old open in a golden livery and a shining dagger held the open door. Wing Commander 'P' staff peeped out and said "Flight Lieutenant Awan, Please come inside" Ravi was left out. I closed the door behind me, Stood to a rigid 'Attention' and saluted. A very kind looking old man had an electric table lamp burning on his table. He swung his swivelling chair towards me and said in a very nice tone, in fact it was too nice and kind to be true. "One of your pilots has been a naughty boy ! Would you please call him in". I called Ravi in. He gave a very smart salute. The A.O.C. went on "You have been doing low flying over the Maharaja of Jind's palace. The A.D.C. took your number and telephoned to me. Please don't let it happen again". He had hardly completed this when he went on "What are you two doing now? If you have not fixed up for lunch, I would like you to come with me to the Imperial gymkhana for lunch" There was a broad smile on our faces. What a fine raspberry we got ! we waited for about fifteen minutes in the office of the A.D.C. Air Commodore Whistler came along and we walked up to the Imperial Gymkhana where very few Indian officers had set their foot before. During lunch we talked a lot about the expansion of I.A.F. Air Commodore Whistler promised that he would setup the nucleus of No. 2 Indian Squadron when permission was given by C.-in-C.

A real fine lunch was given. What a charming talk was given by the Air Commodore. At about 2-30 P.M. he shook hands with us outside the building of Imperial gymkhana Simla and bade good bye to us. He never

mentioned a word about being naughty boys outside his office. What a charming man ! and what lovable manners he possessed. After saying good bye to the Air Commodore we marched down the Mall in Simla. Ravi bought a necklace for Brijinder and I bought a barcelet for Taj as souvenirs of our trip to the Imperial city of Simla; capital of British rule in India.

We drove in Ravi's car. The kind words of the Air Commodore were still fresh in our memory. I jokingly told Ravi "If you did few more performances of yours round the Maharaja's palace, we shall get a few more invitations to Simla, but for Christ's sake don't do it again, as next time it will mean dismissal". Ravi replied with his usual laughter "Actually the damned A.D.C. of Jind is bit of a clown. There was no point in telephoning to the A.O.C.-in-C at Simla just because I had gone round the Maharajas palace once and waved out to a few pretty faces".

At the outbreak of war in September 1939, Air Commodore Whistler was posted back to U.K. He was so nice that he came and inspected my flight of six Audaxes and Harts at Drigh Road Karachi where we had taken up positions for Anti submarine and anti-surface raider patrols in cooperation with the Royal Indian Navy. I asked him to drinks at my house. Taj produced some really good drinks. Mrs. Milne, Group Captain Milne and Air Commodore Whistler dropped in and met all the boys of 'Q' flight stationend in Karachi.

Good people hardly live in this world. Air Commodore Whistler left for London in an Imperial Airways Hannibal aircraft on 11th September 1939. The aircraft reported its last position about 100 miles from Karachi and then there was dead silence. Group Captain Milne rang up and ordered an immediate search along the coast of Mekran. I took off immediately with six Audaxes and combed the entire coast line for two days. Blenheims of No, 60 squadron also joined us. We searched up to Jiwani. Iraq and Aden command of the Royal Air Force searched west of Jiwani for days. It is still a mystery how that Hannibal aircraft disappeared from the sky. Ten days later a fishing boat off the coast of Jiwani picked up a piece of aircraft fabric and longeron floating in the

Arabian ocean. It is a great pity that good men never live long.

A very good training programme was kept up throughout the month of June and July 39. Camera obscura, camera gun exercises both front and rear, puff shoots, dive bombing, low level bombing, tactical reconnaissance, strategic reconnaissance, photo recce, M.P.U. (Message picking up), Popham panel, formation, and night flying etc. was kept up to just as good a standard as the Royal Air Force, if not better. The station Commander was exceedingly happy with us.

By the end of July a signal was received that No. 1 squadron I.A.F. were to hand over their Wapiti aircraft to the Air Force Park Lahore. No. 28 Squadron R.A.F. and another R.A.F. bomber Squadron at Risalpur where to hand over eight Audaxes and six Harts fitted with. Rolls Royace Kestrel engines, to us at Ambala. Handing over and taking over was done within two days. All R.A.F. squadrons were being equipped with Blenheim short nose twin engined bombers. We were exceedingly sorry to part with the old darling Wapitis. It almost brought tears to our eyes to part with the old faithful. I kissed J9751 as I flew her out to Lahore and left her in a stores hanger. I gave her a parting kiss again. I think almost all our pilots did the same. Although it breaks a pilot's heart to say goodbye to an old and faithful aircraft, yet a modern programme of reequipping squadrons had to be carried out. Shadow of shape of things to come in Europe was not too bright. On 1st of August 1939. No. 1 squadron was fully equipped with Harts and Audaxes. Air H.Q. had further promised to replace the six Harts with Audax aircraft immediately these were available after overhaul at the R.A.F. Depot Drigh Road.

We found these aircraft immensely superior to the Westland Wapiti although we had such an attachment and love for Wapiti. All pilots, did about ten minutes dual and soon we were flying in a squadron formation over Ambala. These aircraft were amazingly light and manoeuvreable as compared to the Wapiti. After all you could not expect too much from a poor Wapiti considering that she came out from the last war of 1914-1918 and by 1922-23 replaced all the squadrons of old Biffs (Bristol fighter) and D.H.9A's all over the commands

of the Royal Air Force throughout the British Empire. She had done sterling work over the North West Frontier of India and in Iraq where the Pathan and the Kurd was a nuisance eversince the arrival of British troops in India and Iraq.

In the first week of August, No. 28 Squardon R.A.F. to whom Ambala was a home for the past so many years, like Peshawar was to No. 20 Squadron R.A.F.; moved away to an unknown destination. Squadron Leader Mac-Kenna from Risalpur and Squadron Leader Dick Yubie from Ambala, were sent to Egypt somewhere in the Suez Canal zone to convert on to short nose Blenheim MKI. Two squadrons of R.A.F. from Risalpur also collected their Blenheims from Karachi where these aircraf had been ferried from Egypt. Things began to move fas at an incredible pace.

Dick Yubie and Mackenna returned back from Egypt with two Blenheims. A Blenheim school was started at Ambala. First of all, the R.A.F. boys were put through their paces. There was an extensive day and night flying programme. A new synthetic trainer, the Link, for instrument and blind flying had been received and installed at Ambala. Within two days, the two R.A.F. bomber squadrons from Risalpur fully equipped with the Blenheim twin engined bomber MKI, passed through Ambala on their way to singapore. No. 28 squadron at Ambala had already been replaced by No, 60 bomber squadron R.A.F. Within another few days No. 60 Squadron also disappeared over the horizon, for an unknown destination. Things were happening like lightening when Mr. Hitler was doing a new stunt everyday and grabbed some more territory in Europe by force.

On about the 20th of August Wing Commander Horsley gave us a secret lecture in the garrison theatre and explained the entire international set up in Europe and a very strong possibility of war if Hitler carried on like that or if he took another one or two steps in the wrong direction.

Mukerjee asked me to put all the boys through a stiff doze of dive bombing and front machine gun attacks. On the morning of 26th August 1939 orders were received that No. 1 Squadron will immediately despatch a flight of six Harts and Audaxes under

Flight Lieutenant Awan to Karachi for operational duties in cooperation with the Royal Indian Navy in case Germany declared war on Britain.

Thereupon lightening arrangements were made to test all bomb carriers especially the bigger types, and tuning up the two front Vickers MKIV gas operated machine guns with their guns synchronizing gear constantinesco. I, Habeeb, Ravi, Mehar Singh Goyal and Mohd Khan Janjua fired about a hundred rounds each on the stop butts. By the evening of 27th August all recce codes, secret call signs, codes of the day, special signals and procedures were handed over to me in a special secret bag, under lock and key. At this point it is most significant to say that Air Head Quarters trusted all their worthy Indian officers with all the war codes, and cyphers, etc. All secret procedures, war summaries and intelligence reports were passed on to us like any other officer of the British Empire. I am also very proud to leave it on record here the noble way in which each Indian officer valued these war cyphers, codes and strategic or tactical plans above his own life.

I had been married for a period of four months. I had to explain in a very simple phraseology to my young wife that war clouds had enveloped the whole world. I was leaving with six aircraft for Karachi on the morning of 28th August. Ultimate destination was not known. It may be the Persian gulf or the coast of Mekran and Jiwani. These things do happen in life. An Air Force pilot trains for war throughout the twentyfive years that he serves with the air force. "I shall write to you from Karachi where we are initially going. Then you can decide to give up the bungalow and take the car to my home town at D.I.K. or push off to your parents house at Peshawar."

She was exceedingly brave like all Indian wives who have throughout the history of our motherland given words of encouragement and inspiration to a husband proceeding to war. I did not say a word to my Pathan bearer, and a Hindu Mali and a chowkidar handed over to me by Aspee and Rubie. But everyone in Ambala knew what was happening. Regiment after regiment marched along the Mall at Ambala and left by train either

towards Singapore or towards Egppt. War cries of Allah-o-Akbar, Sat Sri Akal and Har Har Dev filled the air. I bade good bye to my wife on the morning of 28th August. Wing Commander Horsley came to see us off. Mukerjee was there also. By crack of dawn we were up and heading towards Jodhpur, six of us, I, Habeeb, Ravi, Mehar Singh, Goyal and Janjua.

We made Jodhpur in good time. Our friend S/L Hamish Macwhite was there to receive a very large reinforcement of Blenheims on their way to Singapore. There was a terrific shamiana put up with long tables full of sandwiches and drinks (cold drinks and a little beer etc.). Blenheims were a little late. Residents of Jodhpur had turned up in large numbers to see reinforcements going out in both directions.

Aircraft were refuelled in good time. Mehar Singh as usual had been eating sandwiches and drinking orange squash for about half an hour. One man I have seen in my life whose every sense was above average, as compared to a normal person. He could eat as much as an ox. He could drink gallons of orange squash and top it up with Whisky, beer, rum or gin with no effect whatsoever. He could shoot a patridge in quicker time and with less effort than any of us. In flying he was one man who could never get tired and he did not know; probably the only man in I.A.F.: what fear was.

Hart and Audaxes started up on handles only. Two men cranked the handles standing on each lower plane and one of the front wheels. These aircraft were much easier to start up than our Wapitis. After take off the six aircraft joined up on me and I set course across the desert of Rajputana for Karachi. P/O Goyal immediately returned back to Jodhpur. His petrol cap had flown off. I was worried but did not bother to bring the whole formation back. Goyal followed up later after obtaining a spare cap from Burmah Shell.

Group Captain Milne had allocated six war type canvas hangers to us. These were pitched on the other side of the aerodrome. At this site a new hanger was already chock-a-block with Blenheims proceeding to Singapore, Burma and Malaya. However we were allotted an office and an operational telephone in the big new hanger and we were comfortable. Our ground party arrived.

Our flight was given the Code name 'Q' flight. A flight of three short nose Bristol Blenheims of No. 60 Squadron R.A.F. also arrived within two days of our arrival. This flight like ourselves was also detailed for coast defence duties and was given a code name 'Z' flight. Twin engined Blenheims could carry a tremendous bomb load. If am not mistaken it was eight X 250 lb semi armour piercing and armour piercing bombs, plus four front machine guns and two central turret machine guns.

On the morning of 29th August, Hitler's war clouds had almost enveloped the whole of Europe and it was feared that Hitler's challenge to Britain and France was so open and high handed that there was no other alternative but to pickup the glove. Air Forces India were completely unprepared for a modern war. With eight squadrons of the Royal Air Force and one squadron of the Indian Air Force our primary role; equipped with out of date aircraft like Westland Wapitis and Hawker Harts and Audaxes was reconnaissance over the troubled mountains and valleys of the North West Frontier and a continuous watch over the five historic passes namely the Khyber, Kurram, Tochi, Gomal, and Bolan leading into the Soviet Central Asia.

Our standard of training was exceedingly good. Continuous hard work and operations against the tribesmen had made every pilot hard as stones of the North West Frontier. If modern aircraft were provided like Hurricane, Spitfire, Blenheim and the Beaufighter, we could have given a very good account of ourselves against German Heinkel, Masserschimdt, or the Stuka. We were caught unawares literally with our pants down. Thanks to a very good training system devised by those capable officers like Wing Commander Bussell and others; every pilot in India whether British or Indian, was potentially capable of fitting into any role. An outstanding performance of No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. equipped with the obsolete Lysander aircraft against a very superior performance in quality and numbers of the Japanese Zero fighters in Burma in 1941 is a proof of the very high degree of training of all pilots in the Indian Command. How wonderfully No. 60 squadron R.A.F. gave a fair account of themselves in the first Blenheim day light raid over Japanese occupied Rangoon! Although only one pilot of

60 squadron returned back home to tell the tale of untold heroism: No. 60 squadron R.A.F. shot down twice the number of Jap Zeros before going down, as a whole squadron shot out of the sky.

On the morning of 29th August Group Captain Milne Station Commander R.A.F. Depot Drigh Road sent for me and asked me if we had done any naval cooperation before. "No Sir" was my reply "We have done plenty of army cooperation. Naval cooperation should be just as simple when we happen to have specialised in army cooperation and basic procedures. "No-No" was the reply "Navy is a very superior service. Reconnaissance procedures, close support and attack of the enemy is a very specialised subject, which comes after years and years of hard work and practice". I did not realise that Milne was an old Naval Officer and had no knowledge of army cooperation. He had those old ideas about the navy which the Commanders of H.M.S. Repulse and Princeof Wales had when they brought such beautiful ships so terribly near to the Coast of Malaya in 1940-41 when the coast of Malaya was full of Jap fighter and bomber aircraft.

Milne immediately sent a confidential letter to Air Headquarters complaining about the despatch of six Indian aircraft for naval cooperation when no one had a clue to what naval cooperation was. Group Captain Bussell replied back from Air Head Quarters Simla "Give them a chance to settle down. These officers are just as good as any British pilot in India. Results of their army cooperation, bombing and air firing are just as that of the R.A.F. in India; in fact, better. They have specialised in army cooperation, reconnaissance, artillery cooperation etc. etc. and should be able to give a good account of themselves".

This pleased Milne and he became more sympathetic. Our first task was to visit the Royal Indian Navy. Lt. Commander Knott was in charge of operations. He commanded the flag ship H.M.I.S. Ramdas. Bhadrawati, Natrawati, Sophie Marie and St. Anthony; all these were Actually small merchant ships converted into sloops. Each ship carried a four inch gun mounted in front and in the rear also. Multiple pompoms were also carried both in the front and rear for ack ack work. Every ship

carried depth charges and all other war equipment which is carried by a sloop. Each ship was equipped with mine sweeping gear and elaborate wireless sets.

We called on Commander Knott on board the flag ship H.M.I.S. Ramdas. We got used to saluting the Quarter deck. Lt. Commander Knott was an extremely jovial type of a fellow. After every two sentences he used to laugh. We obtained all the 'gen' on secret codes and procedures of the Royal Navy, colours of the day for identification and letters of the day. Procedures and secret codes of naval reconnaissance were handed over to us, along with the cyphering and decyphering machines and cards of the month. We were asked to test out our wireless with the ships of the Royal Indian Navy on patrol duty. This was done with great satisfaction. Our wireless operators were good and the navy also possessed some very good men who soon got used to transmissions from the air. We carried out some high altitude dive bombing from 8,000 feet to 3000 feet and get away tactics against modern battle ships. Front and rear machine guns were tested on ground targets placed in the bed of Malir river and across the South Western corner of the sandy aerodrome. No runways existed at that time at Drigh Road. We spent the after noon in reading up procedures for Naval Cooperation. It was funny enough to find that the procedures were basically the same as those in army cooperation except certain deviations from the basic arrangements. Having qualified at the School of army Cooperation Old Sarum, England, it was not difficult to get down to naval procedures which were easy and required a little practice.

I A.F. AND THE 2ND WORLD WAR

1939-1945

F/O Appleton an officer of the T & D flight R.A.F. Drigh Road was proceeding to Singapore on immediate posting. He possessed a rickety old ramshackle of a Morris Cowley motor car 1926 model which was burried under a building in the Quetta Earth Quake of May 1935. It had already changed about ten hands since the earth

quake. If you saw this car going along the road, you could not tell whether it was a car once upon a time and had gradually deteriorated into the shape of a bullock cart. But still it was there with a hood, an engine, a handle and four wheels. On the morning of 2nd September this young R.A.F. officer mentioned across the breakfast table that he wanted to sell his car for two hundred Indian rupees (equivalent to £16). I put my hand in the pocket and brought out a hundred rupee note which appeared to have lingered on after the pay day. I put up the hundred rupee note and the young F/O accepted, it. He left for Singapore the same morning and left the car with me. My wife was delighted and we nick named this car, 'Blue bird II' after Slr Malcom Cambell's Blue bird. When I brought Blue bird II to the hanger in the after noon, almost the whole of Q flight turned out to see a real motor car bought for one hundred Indian rupees. I asked Corporal Rabbani to check up the ignition timing. Blue bird did all the official work. She was a grand car and went very well inded. She started up, first crank also; Summer or winter. The only flaw in Blue bird II was that she had a crooked chassis due to the damage done in the earth quake of 1935. This made her go in a crabwise fashion along the road. This did not look very appealing to a passer by on the road but still she delivered the goods and always got us there wherever we wanted to go.

Brijinder, Saeeda, and Taj came down to Karachi within a week of our departure from Ambala, They locked up lovely bungalows and our New motor cars and came down to Drigh Road where we were on a war footing and not entitled to family accomodation. The adjutant of R.A.F. Depot was our friend. With great difficulty he permitted the three of us to divide up one Warrant officer's quarter into three married accommodations. This was done and we lived very happily for a period of one year in this quarter. Two months later we loaded up Blue bird II with about six officers and two wives. On this occasion the army officers Janjua, Burhanuddin, and Atam Nanda had come with swords as a full army ceremonial uniform. We were going down to the church of England in Karachi to attend the wedding ceremony of Dick Maling. Near Journey's end, in the locality of the

tram lines, one of Blue Bird's rear wheels came off as I completed a right hand turn. At this time our station doctor of the R.A.F. and his wife were ahead of us in a Morris Minor. We were all amazed to see a motor car tyre proceeding at great speed under its own steam; rolling along the road in front of my car and heading straight towards the rear of the doctor's Morris Minor. Mrs. DOC put her hands up in fright as the tyre hit their car. Immediately the back side of Blue bird II hit the ground with a terrific thud. This was Blue bird's wheel which had come out in a turn and sped forward under terrific velocity as it was carrying no weight. All occupants of the car, came out including my wife and Brijinder. We all had to march up to the church which was luckily not very far. Rear hub had been damaged. Chassis of Blue Bird was already weak. I handed over Blue bird to Mr. Jethanand and Keshu of Messrs Narain-das and Co. Elphinestone Street Karachi and bought a Chevrolet 1937 saloon in part exchange and on a system of monthly instalments. Blue bird fetched a good price and I had to pay only Rs. 1,200 more for the saloon car.

On about the 3rd or 5th of September all of us had gone to Karachi to look up some friends. We had taken Blue bird II to town. On the main crossing of Elphinstone street special supplements of the Civil and Military Gazette were being sold. We bought one for two pice. Here was the news in broad head lines "The baloon goesup. Britian and France accept the German challange. War declared" No time was lost in returning back to Drigh Road. Group Captain Milne had already sent for me and flight Commander 'Z' flight of No. 60 Squadron. R.A.F. He ordered that two pilots from 'Q' flight and one from 'Z' fight will standbye on a 24 hours basis, always with a proper compliment of flight crews. From that very moment, we came on a proper war footing.

With a compliment of six aircraft, I ordered for two to be bombed up and kept ready on a twenty four hour's basis. Thereupon Flight Sergeant Cooper and Sergeant Harjinder Singh made immediate arrangements to get one Hart and an Audax ready with two X 250 lb semi armour piercing bombs and belts of 1500 rounds of front and rear gun ammunition for each aircraft. First evening patrol was organised the same day that war was

declared. I led six aircraft in a circular sweep across the Arabian sea with Centre at Manora point. Audaxes and Harts carried wing tip aerials. We spotted H.M.I.S. Ramdas and H.M.I.S. Bhadrawati on patrol at a distance of about twenty miles from the coastline. A German merchantman had sheered off from an eastern port in Burma or Malaya and was supposed to be off the coast of ceylon. She did not have enough fuel on board and was expected to head towards Bombay or Karachi or set a straight course for East Africa. We were warned by the Royal Indian Navy that the German merchantman carried all types of armament on board and would try to fight her way out of the Arabian ocean into some neutral waters of Egypt or the Mediterranean. We challenged a few ships to display colour of the day or the code letter of the day. Response was nill. This was very embarrassing and we brought it to the notice of Lt. Commander Knott and Flag Officer Commanding.

Next morning we left the aerodrome at dawn and flew straight over our 8" guns at Manora point and then out towards the sea. Aircraft in battle attire really look smart. I was leading the formation in Hart K2116. Habeeb was my No. 2 in Hart 2093. Ravi was No. 3 in Hart 2130. Mehar Singh was No. 4 in Audax K4858. Janjua was No. 5 in Audax K4843 and Goyal was No. 6 in Hart K2129. The noise from short stub exhaust of the Rolls Royace Kestrel engines as fitted to the Harts and long perforated exhaust pipes of the Audaxes made a beautifully synchronised noise which was so pleasing to the ear. All air gunners stood up in the back seat with their swivelled Lewis. guns. I had a trained British Air Gunner in my back cockpit; Sergeant Hall, who remained with me as my air gunner throughot the duration of our duties on coast defence for a period of thirteen months. Sergeant Hall was an exceedingly good fellow and a very capable air gunner and wireless operator.

This was the second day of the war. We found all our Indian ships out on patrol duties. These were spread out over a very large area stretching from Cape Monz to a point about twenty miles South of Clifton. Sergeant Hall was busy tapping out messages to the Naval ships. Two way communication was exceedingly good. I asked the flagship Ramdas with Lt. Commander Nott

on board if all was well. This was confirmed with a further question "Have you antything to report". We had nothing to report as we swept round in an are of a circle round the ships. Our answer was "Nothing to report".

Miles out on a bearing of 270 degrees from Manora point was the swept channel for all ships. We spotted a merchantman at a distance of about thirty miles flying some peculiar flags. We were not conversant with all the flags and colours and messages hoisted by ships. Our orders were to challenge all ships for display of indentification. A red vary light used to be fired from the air and the ship was supposed to display an identification letter or colour of the day. I therefore fired a vary's light in front of the bow of the ship. This was some poor neutral country's ship coming to pick up cotton from the Port of Karachi. The ship immediately stopped its engines and started to drift sideways. I ordered the rest of the formation to stay at 5,000 feet. I descended to about 300 feet to investigate the nationality and friendliness or otherwise of the ship. For what was going on board the ship, it was quite apparent to me that everyone was in a state of panic and a flat spin. Many ships belonging to neutral countries had been attacked by belegerent pilots as enemy craft. Many an innocent sailor and captain has lost his life due to the stupid action of an inexperienced stupid and hasty type of a military aviator. Multicoloured flags of all types were coming up the mast head like one sees on a movie screen. This amused me a lot and I could not help laughing. I wanted to see a letter of the day and not multicoloured nots and crosses coming up the mast like a girl guides rally. Eventually I came down very low upto the crow's nest, waved to the Captain and buzzed off.

For the next ten days all shipping displayed a complete ignorance about the letters of the day and colour of identification etc. Blenheim flight reported the same state of affairs. There were so many neutral ships coming into the Port of Karachi or steering a course through the Arabian sea into the Persian gulf that the matter became a real problem. In the first weekly conference held on board H.M.I.S. Ramdas, when Group

Captain Milne and a British Captain of the Royal Indian Navy were also present, we brought this to the notice of all those concerned. It was decided that in future, position of a ship will be communicated to any of the R.I.N. ships on patrol duty who will further question the identity of a strange ship by means of wireless or flash signals etc. This worked out in a very much better way. We merely reported the position of a strange ship by means of wireless (2 way W/T on a special war frequency) and left the rest to the R.I.N. ship on patrol duty. Some most humorous incidents happened. One day about October 1939, a Japanese ship (Merchantman) was intercepted by H.M.I.S. Ramdas with Lt. Commander Nott on board. On transmitting code words and flashes the reply came "I am Yama Maru bound for Japan". Challenge and the code word was once again thrown in. The reply came "I am Yama Maru bound for Japan". By this time Ramdas was really getting into temper and asked for a third, fourth and fifth time to produce letter of the day. The reply still came "I am Yama Maru bound for Japan." There upon Ramdas sent a W/T message and a flight of two Harts and one Blenheim turned up on the spot. Between the three of us, in the air we threatened this ship to produce letter of the day by shooting red vary lights in all directions. We literally covered the sky with red shooting stars but the reply still came "I am YAMA MARU bound for Japan from the Persian Gulf". There upon we were asked by Ramdas to return to base and YAMA MARU proceeded to Japan without producing a friendly code letter of the day.

Besides cooperating with ships of the Royal Indian Navy we had to carry out cooperation with an 8" coast defence battery of the R.A. stationed at Manora. Guns were very heavily camouflaged. Practically all pilots revised their written procedures and a few cooked up observations starting from a D observation and gradually working up to A,Z, and J where a J salvo denoted about 10 yards from the target. But in coast defence artillery with an upto date 8" battery 10 yards is not good enough. Their table and charts and gadgets for quick firing were so good that within a minute these guns could easily get to straddling a target and obtaining a

succession of direct hits in no time which would stop the moving tar-get and then destroy it at a distance of about 5-7 miles.

On the afternoon of 3rd October 1932 our first shoot came off with the 8" guns of the Royal Artillery stationed at Manora. As usual nobody could claim the first shoot but the flight commander. We had heard the guns firing away with live ammunition since 13.00 hrs. The boom of these 8" guns was terrific. This was clearly heard at Drigh Road R.A.F. aerodrome where we were tuning up our wireless sets in the aircraft. I went home for an early lunch at 12.00 hrs and walked across the sandy aerodrome and the station Hockey ground at the Oval to my home which was a Warrant Officer's quarter. We were not entitled to married accomodation since we were on a war footing and the R.A.F. mess was chock-a-block wlth R.A.F. officers in transit for Singapore, Malaya and Burma.

When I returned back I found that my British Air gunner Corporal Hall had already tested the Wireless set with the ground station. Hart K2084 was already glittering in the sunshine Our men were very fond of shining up the aircraft on the correct appointed time synchronized with the gunners. I started up the aircraft and after warming up and testing of both magnetoes took off. By the time I reached Manora I was at 8,000 ft above mean sea level. I tapped the morse key and a "receiving you O.K." signal was displayed on the ground. I was not aware that this was a big show for the gunners. The Brigade Commander who was an infantier was watching with a pair of Naval binoculars. Senior officers of the Navy, the army and gunners were present at the gun positions (a little behind the guns in a cement concrete tower shaped building facing the open sea). I headed straight out to sea on a rough bearing of 280° M. I spotted a big yellow coloured Motor boat towing a large shaped target painted red and black. The tow line must have been at least 800 yards long. The target was being towed right across the gun sights at a distance of approximately 5-7 miles, at a speed of 8-10 knots. Tick on time I transmitted the code artillery message giving the nature of target, its speed, distance, bearing from our guns, direction of motion etc. my call sign, and addressed

the message to our battery of 8" guns, in accordance with their call sign. One minute was allowed in accordance with the laid down procedure. then I asked the battery with a code word to fire. After calling the guns to fire it depends upon the experience and quickness of a pilot how to get the wings of the aircraft away from the line of vision in order that a shell burst is observed beautifully. This comes with practice and we had been at it for years. The first Salvo of heavy shells arrived within a few seconds and fell at a distance of one hundred yards from the next predicted position of the target. I immediately sent an A observation down on the morse key and asked the battery to fire. Next salvo came within 50 yards and then the guns straddled the target. This was wonderful. Immediately I sent an O.K. and shells came in such quick succession that I saw one bonnce the target up in the air. This was an amazing accuracy at a distance of 5-7 miles and at a speed of 7-10 knots of the moving target. I wish the air force could bomb with such precision whether high altitude, low level, or dive bombing was concerned. I was wonderstruck. My entire brain was filled with admiration for a very nice British Major, if I have not forgotton the name I think it was Major Halford who commanded this battery of 8" guns at Manora. I immediately wrote down a message in the air on a message pad tied on my right knee.

"Following for Major Halford:- Congratulations, wonderful shooting. Best I have seen so far.

"F/Lt. Awan"
I,A.F.

I tore out the message from the pad and gave it to Corporal Hall to place in a message bag and get ready for dropping it on the guns. I came low right over the guns and fired a green very light indicating that I was coming in to drop a message. I wish I had not done this as the guns were still firing on another target. It is one of the most dangerous things for an army cooperation pilot to come low over the guns not knowing whether these are firing or not. There is a liklihood of getting into the line of fire and being blown up sky high. However I was so thrilled and filled

with admiratian for the Gunner's shooting with such heavy guns and with such wonderful accuracy that I was determined to congratulate Major Halford at all cost. When Corporal Hall dropped the message on top of the gun positions, the message was immediately picked up and given to Major Halford who passed it on to his Colonel and the Brigade Commander standing in the cement concrete tower. All were happy.

We received a message through Group Captain Milne the same evening that the gunners had asked us to watch their firing on the ground at Manora tomorrow morning and later have lunch with them. We were exceedingly happy and turned np next morning at Manora. We came in full strength; I, Habeeb, Ravi, Mehar, Janjua Atam Nanda, Burhanuddin, Goyal, and Arjan Singh. Only Prithipal remained behind for stand by duties. The gunners were exceedingly nice to us. We all stood in the cement concrete tower and a fairly complicated gunner's computor on a big table was explained to us. It looked more complicated with two or three moveable arms and a few circular calibrations and vernier scales etc. than the best of our bomb sights (we were still using C.S.B.S. course setting bomb sight which was a relic of the last war of 1914-18), but the Blenheims had a new type of telescopic bomb sight on which the bomb aimer merely set his own speed, and computed wind speed, direction, and speed of the target etc. After this you merely looked through the telescope and when the target appeared in the centre, you merely pressed the tit which executed an electric release and a 500 lb bomb was gone.

The whole of the tower shook when three of these 8" guns boomed together. The noiceof the explosion was so terrific that we felt like plugging our ears. My own impression was that if a man continuously lived behind an 8" 12" or 16" gun and kept on pressing the trigger very often : he either became so thick skinned that no explosion in the world could even make him look around, or he would get so jumpy that even the noise of a 12 bore shot gun would make up jump up sky high.

Major Halford and the gunners were exceedingly nice to us. They took us to their mess where a magnificent lunch was provided. I have always wondered why

we never asked the gunners R.A. to come to lunch with us at Drigh Road. This was one of those unfortunate invitations which we kept on postponing every week till the time when we learnt that Major Halford was gone. His shooting was so good that he must have been asked to a better theatre of operations than Manora point.

Even after Major Halford was gone, our cooperation with the gunners remained for a long time. Two more live shoots were carried out with them by Habeeb and Ravi and later on additional shoot by F/O Mehar Singh. Exceedingly good results were obtained.

Many lectures were given by naval officers on the types of armament carried by the German pocket battleships Deutchland and Graf Von Spee. Group Captain Milne asked me continuously to practice dive bombing with four Harts in echelon to the right formation. Harts were a good aircraft for dive bombing. From 10,000 to 4,000 feet, dive bombing by four Harts, used to produce good fun at the aerodrome. All airmen used to watch the fun at the aerodrome. All airmen used to watch the fun as I used to lead a formation with Habeeb, Ravi and Mehar. One day Milne and Ironmonger stood for half an hour watching our accurate dive bombing across the Malir river and the South-east corner of the aerodrome. We enjoyed it tremendously also. But how we would have faired against the Deutchland or Graf Von Spee in the waters of the Arabian sea; God alone knows? We were all set for our humble duty.

Two pilots remained on duty on a 24 hours basis. At night they slept in the hanger and kept their parachutes, Mae West, and flying kit ready. Two aircraft remained bombed up and carried 1500 rounds of front and rear machine gun ammunition.

One day F/O Burhanuddin Prince of Chitral and F/O Mehar Singh were on standby duties at the hanger. My wife and I changed into Tennis Kit and had gone down to the officers mess to play. When we were returning back I saw Mehar and Burhan standing in front of my house in the Warrant Officer's quarters. They were holding a big packet of Indian sweets in their hands. "You damn fellows" I said, "You are supposed to be standing by those bombed up aircraft as duty pilots. What the devil are you two doing". There was burst of a typical

Pathan and Sikh laughter from the two of them. "Zaidy-we went down to the Saddar and bought these sweets from Chandu halwai. We have already asked your cook to give us an early supper. We want to enjoy these sweets after supper and then buzz off to the hanger" and then they laughed again. Even my wife laughed at this mischief. Two stand by pilots missing from the hangar was a sufficient offence to convene a Court Marshal in the days of the British rule. But Burhan and Mehar argued that they had fixed it with the "Z" flight R.A.F. that one of their pilots will standby for extra duty. This was an arrangement which would not have been appreciated by Group Captain Milne, and then the telephone rang in my house "Milne here. There is no corner flood light in your hanger and also there is no reply to the telephone in standby pilot's room. Have your pilots gone off to sleep". This was enough of a nightmare for me. I shouted at Burhan and Mehar. I still remmeber that they hurriedly dropped the large packet of sweets on the ground, filled their hands and mouth and ran out towards Mehar's baby Austin car parked out-side my house. Mehar and Burhan were inseparable friends. It was realy unimaginable. One was a Pathan from the wild wooly North, of Chitral and the second was a typical Jat Sikh of Layalpur. But the two were like real brothers.

At regular intervals we carried out front and rear gun attacks on ground targets and also on a towed drogue over the sea. One day I had a strange experience. We were puting a few new air gunners through a training scheme, A.C. 2 Murli Dhar was flying with me in the rear seat. I was flying at a distance of about one hundred yards away from a red drogue towed by a Wapiti over the sea off Sandspit. Murli Dhar was firing away nicely on the drogue. When the firing stopped I looked back at Murli Dhar and he put the two thumbs up; an old R.A.F. sign meaning 'O.K.' I broke away from the drogue and went upto the Wapiti and waggled my wings and then did a steep right hand descending turn towards East Wharf and Drigh Road. Murli Dhar swung the gun backwards with the scarfring and fixed his Lewis gun in a clamp in the fuselage. Just then a good burst of machine gun bullets went off. This was a little bit

alarming as all air gunners are supposed to clear their guns well out to sea before pulling the safety catch on. Very little did I knew that Murli Dhar had blown my tail away. I did not feel anything as the machine remained perfectly in control. When we landed; Flight Sergeant Cooper showed me the hole about six inches in diameter right through the tail of the aircraft. It was exceedingly lucky to have missed my elevator control cables by fraction of an inch otherwise we would have nose dived into East Wharf from a height of four thousand feet.

I tried to hush up the incident and told British flight sergeant Cooper to keep quiet about the whole thing. Unfortunately on a big station there is a proper system of spies organised by the Station Warrant Officer. Whatever happens or is even spoken off is carried to the Station Warrant Offiicer who in turn reports it to the Station Commander. At this time W/O Beresford who was an ex. drill sergeant at the R.A.F. College Cranwell when Arjan and Prithipal were in the fourth term; was the station warrant officer. The incident was reported to Group Captain Milne and we were hauled up. My honest views are that drill instructor is very good on the parade ground but outside the parade ground, he is not so very good. Drill instructors should never be made station warrant officers on a big flying and technically organised Air Force station. Station warrant Officer must always be a technical man who knows that there was a time when he made technical mistakes. Therefore he is prepared to forgive a technical mistake of someone else if it happens to be a real and genuine unintentional mistake.

Poor Murli Dhar had no intention of sticking a few bullets in his Flight Commander's tail as much as he had an intention of putting a few in his own. After all he was flying in the same aircraft. A shot off elevator control would have meant sudden death for his Flight Commander and himself, alike. The fact of the case was that he had removed the round magazine from his Lewis gun up in the air. Not having enough experience in air firing, as he was still under training, he had forgotten to realize that a few rounds were still in the breach of the gun. So when he swung the gun backwards with a view to fixing it in the clamp, his

finger was still on the trigger and six or eight rounds went off through the tail.

Milne was exceedingly annoyed with me for not putting Murli Dhar into close arrest and throwing him into a dungeon of the Depot quarter guard behind iron bars. Our ex. Drill sergeant Major Beresford had not realised that code of aviators is different to a squad on parade. Birds of the same feather and aircrews have a terrific liking towards each other and especially in war time when aviators juggle with death everyday.

Milne did not listen to any of my arguments as a Flight Commander. He listened to his Sergeant Major. Murli Dhar was standing to attention next to me and was very very frightened indeed. Group Captain Milne awarded 28 days detention to poor Murli Dhar. It almost broke my heart when I saw the poor boy marched away by a party of the armed quarter guard, to be locked up in a dungeon.

Beresford's stupidity brought me innumerable raspberries from Milne. On one occasion during December 1939 Arjan Singh was talking to a Sikh friend of his in Karachi from Drigh Road on the telephone. The Sikh friend was married to a European woman who was watched very strictly by the C.I.D. and intelligence. On this occasion there was an alarm in the very late hours of the previous night as one of our naval ships had intercepted a code W/T message from an Italian or German submarine in the close proximity of Karachi Harbour.

An alarm was raised by the Navy and I took off with four aircraft; one Hart and three Audaxes to intercept the submarine. We went over Clifton bridge and Manora at about 4. A.M. On a December morning. The noise of these aircraft was terrific when we were out on a submarine hunt. I was leading the formation in pitch dark at about two hundred feet. There was a colossal scare in town as it was feared that a German surface raider or an Italian submarine had appeared off the coast of Manora at night. A Blenheim of Z flight and four ships of the R.I.N. also joined in the search. A 'Sub' is about the easiest prey that an aviator looks for. Probably the same 'Sub' was shot up by a ship of the Merchant Navy two days later in the Persian gulf. But we had no luck at all.

This woman rang up Arjan Singh enquiring about the location of the Submarine. Arjan dodged the question. The telephone line was tapped by our intelligence men. Arjan and I got a raspberry for no reason. I got so browned off with raspberries on behalf of my pilots that one day I really lost my temper with all pilots of 'Q' flight.

By the end of December 39 or first week of January 1940, War exploits of the German pocket battle ships Deutschland and Graf Von Spee had gained so much fame that the mere names Deutschland and Graf Von Spee had created a night mare for the Royal Indian Navy, Indian Merchant Ships, the coastal battery R.A. Manora, 'Q' flight I.A.F. and 'Z' flight R.A.F. Drigh Road. We were busy in practicing tactics against these pocket battleships if they happened to emerge in the Indian ocean or the Arabian sea from their present positions in the Atlantic. I was quite convinced that with determined aviators like Burhan, Arjan, and Mehar I would definitely be in a position to get one or two hits on these battleships even if we were blown up sky high. When talking to all the boys; Habeeb, Ravi, Mehar, Goyal, Arjan Singh, Prithipal, Burhan, Janjua and Atam Nanda, I was always given the confidence that we should score hits even if blown up sky high at the end of the dive. Against a German or Italian Submarine or a converted merchantman, I did not have the least shadow of doubt that we should sink it within two attacks. War is like a game of Hockey, one gets hurt occasionally but a goal is definitely scored against the other side. We had received so many wounds in Hockey that the idea of another slightly more serious wound in war was not creating any sense of danger in our minds. Every time we studied Janes book on battleships of the world, we scrutimized some vulnerable points of Deutschland or Graf Van Spee. All the boys of the village had a laugh and there would be an invariable "Come on let us have some more tea". The Indian Air Force, army and Navy won heir battles on Indian tea more than anything else.

Deutschland and Graf Van Spee had won some more victories in the Atlantic on some poorly escorted sea convoys of Merchantmen. This was a bad show.

Commander Nott was more and more full of hatred as he spoke during our weekly conferences on board H.M.I.S. Ramdas. "These damned dacoits of the high seas. They are playing havoc with poor merchant ships. I wish they would come up against one of our battleships like Rodney or Nelson". Suddenly the intelligence secret reports indicated that Von Spee may break into the Pacific ocean leaving Deutschland to prowl about in the waters of the Atlantic. The Navy created such an alarm that the picture of these ships almost haunted every sailor and airmen. In these tense moments F/O Burhanuddin created a panic by sending a W/T alarm signal about spotting an Italian Submarine off Cape Monz. H.M.I.S. St. Anthony on patrol duty, proceeded to the spot. In the meantime two Blenheims of 'Z' flight No. 60 squadron R.A.F. spotted a big whale exactly in the some locality as reported by F/O Burhanuddin. They fired on the whale with front guns. The whale disappeared below the water after receiving a whole burst of machine gun fire. It was probably sunk and never rose again.

Those false alarms coupled with the infamous successes of Deutschland and Graf Von Spee in sinking a few defenceless merchant ships in the Atlantic had created an imaginary night mare for those of us patrolling the waters of Arabian sea. Blenheims could strike upto 200-300 miles from the coastline from Manora point as centre of the circle and we could strike upto 150 miles out to sea with centre at Manora.

One night during January there was a thunder storm over Karachi. Multipronged lightening lashed in all directions of the sky. Cold wintery rain lashed our canvas hangers and aircraft. It was a cold and dark night. Within fifteen minutes our sandy aerodrome at Drigh Road was wet and soft. Three ships of the Royal Indian Navy were on patrol duty. The flagship H.M.I.S. Ramdas was in the Southerly sector from Manora light house. At about one O'Clock in the morning when light rain and flashes of lightening were still there, an over keen type of an able sea-man on watch duties actually saw the German pocket battleship Deutschland proceeding towards Ramdas in the light of flashes of lightening from the clouds. After Deutschland

came to about a mile of Ramdas she commenced to turn a broadside on in order to give a doze of those funny fireworks she carried on board. Poor Ramdas carried a 4" gun in the front and a 4" gun in the rear whereas the German pocket battleship carried teeming turrets of 14" guns. Deutschland swung into firing position. In the next flashes of thunder and lightening, the able seaman saw the guns raising their heads to the elevation and angle of fire towards Ramdas. The able seaman yelled at the top of his voice "Deutschland-Deutschland-Deutschland" everyone ran to the gun stations. Gunner Officer was at his post within two seconds, and looked through the darkness and intermittent flashes in order to work out range and angle of elevation of his 4" guns, Gommander Nott also ran down to the gun positions. Everyone knew that there was practically no match between Ramdas and Deutschland. A top priority 'Operations immediate' coded W/T message was sent to Drigh Road, Manora and all those concerned. On this particular night I and F/O Mehar Singh were on night standbye duty. Operations telephone rang. I quietly noted down the message on a slip of paper. Position of Ramdas which was further to indicate position of the German raider was pin pointed on my map and Mehar's. We were busy putting on our flying sydcoat, parachute, and Mae West Etc. All lights in the hanger and the parking paron etc. were switched on. Within seconds our airmen had wheeled out one Hart and one Audax which were fully bombed up. 'Z' flight had also wheeled out a Blenheim. All three aircraft had been started up as we rushed out. It was a wicked night. Heavy rain had stopped and there was a very gentle drizzle. Night was as dark as I have never seen before; with intermittent long distance flashes of lightening. Our sandy aerodrome was very soft due to a heavy shower. Pucca runways did not exist in those days. I thought to myself when donning a Mae West on top of the parachute "Out of three hundred and sixty five nights in a year, the Commander of Deutschland had to choose a night for an attack on Karachi when the weather was bad and the aerodrome was almost unserviceable". However it was thought that the enemy has to pick a night like that, when help is difficult.

Mehar had parked himself in the Audax aircraft which was considered fully fit for night flying. I got into the Hart with short exhaust stubs which threw out so much of the flames that it dazzled the eyes of the pilot on take off and landing. Air H.Q. had declared that Harts were unfit for night flying. However all was fair in love and war. We had Harts, therefore we had to fly them during day and night also.

The Blenheim fitted up with headlights etc. was the first to take off. We soon followed. Generally we avoided Harts for night flying but on this occasion there was no other alternative. A streak of continuous flames lashed out of the stubs of the Kestrel engine as I opened the throttle. The ground was soft. We were talking off from the western side towards the bright star on the Eastern Horizon. Mehar took off a bit to my left and caught me up between Clifton and Manora. Manora was in darkness due to the raid alarm. Only the light house gave a dim revolving light.

What was happening on board H.M.I.S. Ramdas was that a narvous and dopy type of an able sea-man had an extra feed of hot curry and rice with plenty of spices before coming on watch duties at midnight. He had seen pictures of the German pocket bettleship Deutschland so many times during a synthetic training programme when films were projected on movie screen etc. that the picture was alway at the back of his mind sleeping or awake. On this occasion his mind must have been worked up to such a pitch that he actually imagined a real Deutschland emerging out of darkness and preparing to devour Ramdas. His nerves gave way and he yelled "Deutschland - Deutschland Deutschland". Hearing these yells and screams, Commander Nott ran upto the gunnery officer and at the same time originated an 'emergency operations' message to Drigh Road and Manora. On questioning the able sea-man, they soon discovered that he had a nightmare; although, he still swore that he actually saw Deutschland swinging her 14" gun turrets in the direction of Ramdas.

When over Manora, my wireless operator air gunner passed a W/T message that he had received from Ramdas "All is well-return to base, false alarm". When I read this message with the help of a square torch cell

that alway used to dangle from my neck during night flying, I almost swore at the Navy. Rain storm did not matter at all for the Navy as their ships plough through water but to an aircraft of the olden days a rain and thunder storm made such a lot of difference. Blenheim had also received the same message and had returned to Drigh Road. It was a poor British sergeant pilot who did not have much experience on Blenheims. While landing a bright flash of lightening put him off his judging the distance from ground altogether and he crashed upside down. When I came over the aerodrome followed by Mehar there were crash and fire tenders and ambulances running arround towards the crash from all corners of the aerodrome. The flare path and centre of aerodrome was blocked so we landed at the civil airport with the help of a landing flood light fixed on the ground. When we returned to our hanger we sent all airmen to the crashed Blenheim, in order to remove the bombs. She carried 8×250 lbs plus thousands of rounds of machine gun ammunition. After this was completed we came home for a cup of hot tea. Here we learned that Taj, Saeeda and Brijinder had rushed out to the verandah of the top storey of the house on hearing the crash alarm. They could see the crashed aircraft in the head lights of so many rescue vehicles, from across a house situated on the other side of the oval. Each of these ladies had a tear in her eyes. They felt very sorry and sad when an I.A.F. or R.A.F. brother aviator crashed.

Group Captain Milne was very annoyed when he came to know about the previous night's alarm. However he could not express his anger in the next conference on board H.M.I.S. Ramdas as a Naval Captain was in the chair and we could not even touch upon the stupidity of such a false alarm which was originated by a blooming able seaman and cost us one valuable Blenheim aircraft.

By February 1940 we were experts at Naval cooperation and also inartillery shooting with the gunners at Manora. Several exercises were held with the help of a big naval flood light fixed at Manora. One day the navy rang up that an Indian aircraft was beating up a ship at a distance of one hundred miles from Karachi. Our

patrol used to be upto fifty miles in an arc of a circle with radius at Manora. I found it was Mehar Singh amusing himself with a newship which had been added to the fleet of Karachi. He got a good raspberry from me when he returned.

Our orders used to be to challenge a ship with red vary light and force it to display letter of the day. On failing this we were authorised to put up a burst of machine gun fire in front of her bows at a respectable distance. One day Goyal met one of our new converted metchant ships at a considerable distance out to sea. This was at about sunset. P/O Goyal fired a red light to which there was no response. He then put up a burst of machine gun fire so near to the bows of the ship that the Captain sent an immediate operations signal to Manora repeated Drigh Road. This incident was very strongly resented by the Navy. I had to pass instructions to all pilots not to open fire in front of the bows of ships as a final challenge for displaying letter of the day.

By February 1940 Group Captain Milne had devised a new technique of locating and attacking enemy ships at night. The whole thing was based on one of our own ships shadowing the enemy and then communicating the distance and bearing of the enemy from her own position by means of a W/T signal. Two Audaxes used to fly out from their base at Drigh Road and fly straight out to sea to the location of our own ship. After having reached our own ship and having seen a screened light on board, a new course was steered to the enemy ship. Having reached the enemy ship a parallel lane was flown about 400 yards wide right on top of the enemy ship. Eight parachute flares were dropped at distances of 100 yards. This was done at a height of 6,000 feet above sea level. In the meantime a Blenheim used to fly at a very low altitude of five hundred feet from the sea level and carry out low level bombing attacks, on the enemy ship illuminated by our parachute flares havingan intensity of millions of candles.

On 13th February 1940 Habeeb and I took off on a night interception practice with the R. I. N. V. R. We were both flying Audax aircraft. I was in K4848. A Blenheim of 'Z' flight No. 60, Squadron R.A.F., also left at the same time but was a litle behind us. Position

of Ramdas was communicated to me by wireless just after take off. I plotted it on the map which had a set of bearing lines already plotted with centre at Manora. Before I reached Manora, bearing and distance of the enemy ship which in this case was one of our own for the sake of practice, was communicated to me by Ram Das. My Wireless Operator Air Gunner A.C. Jay Kant passed the message slip to me. Habeeb was in close formation on my left. It was a pitch dark night. We came dead on top of Ramdas. A screened identification light was shown to us on board H.M I.S. Ramdas and I changed my course towards the enemy. A distance of two miles was given by Ramdas. After exactly one minute I turned at right angles to the right and then left. Habeeb did the opposite. He turned first left and then right in order to fly in a lane. Immediately, we commenced to drop parachute flares on top of the supposed enemy. Considerably below our parallel lane of parachute flares, our Blenheim had located the ship and delivered a sharp low level bombing attack and then got away. That night the city of Karachi came out of the homes to watch the illuminations in the sky off Manora. There was a dance at the British officers club in town. Every one came rushing out to watch parachute flares high up in the sky.

This was one of the most difficult exercises we ever did in cooperation with the Navy. It was just as difficult for us to calculate our courses and distances to be flown and the lane of flares to be made as it was for the intrepid pilot of the Blenheim; over monstrous waves in the light of the flares with a view to locating and attacking the enemy ship.

After the completion of this successful exercise for which Group Captain Milne and the Captain R.I.N.V.R. were very pleased, Habeeb received orders to return back to No. 1 Squadron at Ambala. Here I had to say goodbye to a very capable lieutenant of mine. I had many more capable chaps with me. Soon afterwards, Ravi was also recalled back to Ambala. By now the younger boys had sufficient amount of training and were fully fledged Naval Cooperation pilots.

Janjua and Prithipal Singh went on a night sortie with the R.I.N.V.R. They took off at about 10 P.M. and flew in formation out to sea. After carrying

out two hours patrol in cooperation with the R.I.N.VR. they returned back. Prithipal Singh landed first and as usual passed some humorous remarks about the cold weather and the R.I.N.V.R. Janjua landed fifteen minutes later and was having a hearty laugh. He had seen a peculiar phenomenon. When looking below his cockpit, he saw millions of stars twinkling away in a dark firmament. There was a bright milky way also. His air gunner also came and swore that he saw millions of twinkling stars and a bright milky way directly below the aircraft. We all had a laugh. How could this happen, unless they both had something to drink. Twinkling stars and a milky way are always visible above the oockpit when looking upwards and not downwards. They both laughed and said that the milky way was below the cockpit, when looking down wards. For about half an hour we sat in the pilots room and laughed at the stupidity of the phenomenon. Eventually Mehar came to our rescue. "The damn fellows have been flying upside down, with their bombs, machine guns, wireless sets, and cameras etc." said Mehar. So now there was a proper clue to this proposition, and we all laughed; even louder. What had happened was that after doing a few steep right hand and left hand turns over the ship in the pitch darkness where a steep turn is executed more by looking at the topmost mast light of a ship rather than by blind flying instruments fitted to those highly manoeuvrable biplances of the olden days; Janjua had probably given too much bank and rudder to one side and had unintentionally gone on his back without realizing that he was downside up or upside down. The pilot and air gunner still carried on with their reconnaissance and saw many stars below where they were expecting to see the fore and oft mast lights of H.M.I.S. Sophie Marie. The aircraft eventually corrected it self due to high degree of stability of Hawker aircraft of those days.

In March 1940 aircraft Depot R.A.F. Drigh Road gave a musical stage show in the cinema hall for the collection of war funds. It was one of the most delightful amateur stage performance that I have ever seen in my life. R.A.F. Depot at this time possessed a wonderful station band. I still remember that 'Song of the Volga Boatmen' with vocal strain, was rendered in

such complete perfection that everyone was charmed. All officers and their wives and all W/O's, sergeants and airmen witnessed this show. Taj and Brijender also accompanied us. All officers wore mess kit and men had turned up in best barathea and ties.

A week later F/O Ravinder Singh and F/O Goyal arranged a show on behalf of I.A.F. for the purpose of collecting war funds. The show was not so popular as that arranged by R.A.F. Ravi and Goyal collected local musical talent from the Drigh Road Bazar. Village bards turned up with their native tabla, saz and Sarangi. The show would have been a half failure but for the kind assistance of a Hindu aristocratic girl from Karachi who volunteered to come to Drigh Road and help the I.A.F. She performed such bedazzling well dance and a few other themes from the Indian Village life like a harvest dance and temple dance that the show passed off nicely without severe criticism.

On 25th February 1940, a W/T Signal was received from Ambala ordering me and Mehar Singh to reach Ambala by 26th, for a squadron conference. I took this signal to Group Captain Milne who showed a little twinkle in this eyes. He knew that No. 1 Squadron had gently requested the station commander to call up Awan and Mehar Singh for a semifinal hockey game in the Ambala Brigade championship. No. 1 Squadron had come up against a stiff army side. They knew they could not win without me and Mehar. Actually I had always captained the I.A.F. Hockey team and played in the centre forward position since 1933. We had won many trophies in army competitions at Karachi during 1933-1936 and Peshawar 1936-1938. We had also won Ambala Brigade hot weather Hockey turnaments in June-July. 1939.

On the evening of 25th February Mehar came to my house and enquired about what I was taking to eat for the journey Karachi Ambala. "Don't worry Zaidy" he said "Leave the Garma Garam Kabab and Roti to me. I shall fix this with plenty of oranges etc. and a thermos flask full of hot tea". I knew Mehar well. Either he would have brought so much of food and of different varieties that it would have been difficult to take off or he would have turned up with not even a boiled egg

or a single tomatoe sandwich. As a factor of safety I asked my wife to arrange with the cook that a few nice egg omlettes and about four Purathas were nicely wrapped up together in a clean white cloth and my small thermos was filled up with hot tea. This was done.

Hart K2084 was rigged up with luggage containers fixed underneath the bottom main planes. A flight Commander was a very considerate type of a fellow in those days. I told Mehar that for prestige's sake I must pilot the aircraft when flying back to the Squadron Headquarters at Ambala, but I told Mehar that he would pilot the aircraft on the return journey from Ambala to Karachi and I would sleep in the back cockpit. This was agreed to by Mehar with a broad grin, and we took off for Ambala.

When I landed at Jodhpur, Gurcharan of the Burmah Shell was there to proceed with refuelling. I supervised the refuelling personally with my squadron white flying overalls still on. After filling up the main tank and the auxilliary, I signed vouchers for having taken so much petrol and oil and kept a copy of the signed voucher in the top pocket of my overalls. I further checked up that all petrol and oil caps were firmly fixed and locked before saying "Thank you-Gurcharan. You are a dear friend".

By this time I was feeling very hungry and climbed up in the rear cockpit to discover that the tea flask was empty and the white cloth which was so carefully wrapped in enclosing egg omlettes and four Purathas was lying in an opened condition on the floor of the rear cockpit without the list of contents. Only one sandwich was lying in it. It suddenly transpired that about an hour before I reached Jodhpur I looked behind and with a tremendous trouble in craning my neck backbackwards to find out what Mehar was doing, I noticed that the blighter was squatting on the floor with his back towards me and was moving his two hands on his beard which is generally the act when the last traces of butter have to find a worthy place in the beard, after the completion of a hearty meal. He had suddenly realized that he had forgotten to bring anything to eat so in good humour he laid his hands on the Flight Commander's breakfast before I got to Jodhpur. Mehar stood near

the wind sock in a corner of the aerodrome and would not come near me.

Without breakfast I was in bad humour. On the way to Ambala when I was passing near the Sambur salt lake, Mehar stood up in the rear cockpit and pointed towards the Sambur salt lake on the horizon. "Your breakfast is down the Sambur lake, but here is an orange for you" he said. He had very nicely peeled an orange from his own gardens in Layalpur and passed it to me. That orange tasted to me like honey and nector from paradise. A hungry aviator can almost eat anything with good relish.

When we reached Ambala, Mukerjee and Aspee were so happy to see us. Mehar and I had brought our own Hockey sticks from Karachi. Mehar played as full back and I in the centre forward position. We won the semifinals but were unlucky in the finals. There was a consolation that we had previously won the brigade championship in July 1939.

When we returned back to Drigh Road Karachi, Mehar did a hat trick in winning the handicap golf championship where all the best golf players of Karachi and R.A.F. were competing. It is really astonishing how Mehar won this championship because he had never held a golf club in his hand before. He practised swinging a golf club like a hockey stick in the beginning and then expanded the swing to a beautiful stroke. Then it was a daily practise with him across the aerodrome when standing by in 'Q' flight. After Mehar won the golf championship of Drigh Road, I won the inter-services Tennis championship of Western Command. In singles I beat Major Gardner who was supposed to be Army's No. 8 in U.K. In doubles I partnered F/O Evans of the R.A.F. We beat a very good couple Major Green of the Royal Engineers, and partner This was a very good show for the Indian Air Force as we were getting good publicity in flying and war duties as well as in sports. During previous years i.e. from 1933-1940, all brigade championships of Karachi, Peshawar and Ambala had been won by our Hockey team which was captained by me.

At the outbreak of war, Group Captain Bussell incharge of training at A.H.Q. Simla had put forward a

scheme of training more Indian officers and men for the expansion of the Indian Air Force. He put up a plan for the formation of five Indian coast defence flights at Karachi, Bombay, Trichinopoly, Madras and Calcutta. This was approved by the A.O.C-in-C Sir Joubert-De-La Ferte. A flying training school was formed at Risalpur. A lovely big R.A.F. station was lying vacant. So the first flying training school started at Risalpur with a batch of pupils consisting of a few British Indian army officers, Hem Chowdhry, and Bhunj Deo prince of Muir Bhanj State. A few school teachers and politicians of the European race domiciled in India were also brought in as volunteers for the I.A.F. Russell a prominent business man from Bombay and sprawson a school master from the princely college at Rajkot also came to Risalpur for obtaining their wings. Wapiti aircraft which we had discarded were allocated to the five coast defence flights. These aircraft were flown upto Karachi, Trichonopoly Bombay, Madras and Calcutta by R.A.F. ferry pilots a few months before the first batch of pilots passed out of the fiying school at Risalpur.

By February 1940 a second batch consisting of Bapu Murad, Raza, Das, Rabb, Raja Ram, Sita Ram etc. etc. was also entered into the R.I.A.F. Flying School Risalpur. A batch of Navigators was also entered. The school was proving to be such a success that Group Captain Bussell now thought of shifting the school to Ambala and also planning a school of Technical Training At Ambala, a preliminary training school at Walton Lahore, Two E.F.T.S.'s (Elementary flying training schools at Jodhpur and Begumpet Hyderabad Deccan), and a civil flying club training scheme in the flying clubs at Karachi, Lahore, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Patna. Group Captain Bussell was a very sincere and hard working man. A.O.C-in-C always had a lot of time for his schemes. A third batch of pilot officers with Jaswant Singh, Naranjan Prasad, Asghar Khan etc. had also entered Risalpur and a fourth batch consisting of P/O Mohinder Singh Verdi was sent to U.K. and the rest of the trainees consisting of P/O Nurkhan, Cheema, Prince of Sikkim, Prince of Sangli, and many more were also selected for entry into the flying school at Risalpur.

These brave boys entered the Indian Air Force and increased our strenght considerably. They filled the air with their brave exploits.

During the months of February and March we carried out an intensified programme of bombing attacks and practice against capital enemy ships and submarines. We intensified putting our own air gunners like Ghulam Ali, Wali Mohd, Mani Singh, Murli Dhar, Jaykant, Kartar Singh, Aziz, Sergeant Hall and Cpl Cunningham through their paces in air gunnery and ground firing. Regular patrols both at Dawn, and at dusk were carried out in cooperation with our Navy. For a period of one year you could almost set your watch when seeing two 'Q' flight Harts take off in formation from Drigh Road everyday without fail at about half an hour before dawn and at 4 P.M. for a two hour patrol incooperation with our Navy and coastal guns at Manora. When seeing R.P.A.F. these days one wonders how 'Q' flight with a compliment of six aircraft and about eight pilots could keep up an everyday dawn and dusk patrol and a terrific training programme throughout the day. We never lost a single aircraft over a period of thirteen months. Only once when the aerodrome was covered in winter fog, did I feel uneasy about F/O Mehar Singh for whom I had sent a recall signal by W/T when cooperating with the Navy at night. I sent him to the civil airport to land. Once Habeeb plonked a Hart in the bed of the Malir river about 10 miles East of the Malir railway bridge when ferrying an old aircraft whose Kestrol engine (Rolls Royace) was consuming too much oil. We decided not to lose this aircraft. It belonged to 'B' flight of No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. Ambala and not 'Q' flight of I.A.F. I retrieved this aircraft from the bed of the Malir river. What had happened was that No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. wanted to send a Hart aircraft to the R.A.F. Depot Drigh Road, for complete overhaul as she had completed her engine and airframe times. The engine, a Rolls Royace Kestrel 500 H.P. was consuming excessive oil and no one was prepared to fly it. Habeeb as usual volunteered to fly her via Jodhpur, where he discovered that she was consuming more oil than petrol. Between Ambala and Jodhpur, she had consumed a fantastic quantity of oil.

Being a determined type of on aviator; Habeeb

did not want to give up the flight at Jodhpur. He was an experienced Navigator also and had sound knowledge of engines. He filled up his tanks and estimated that at a height of 10,000 feet above sea level he would get a favourable wind for Karachi. This height would enable him to reduce the engine revolutions, and with a good radiator control for water cooling of the engine, he should be in a position to eliminate excessive heat also, thereby saving a little oil which should help him to get to Drigh Road. Unfortunately the engine was so ropy and old that about ten miles from Drigh Road, after the complete exhaustion of oil supply, the engine ceased up and Habeeb had no other alternative but to plonk down in the bed of the Malir River. He made a perfect landing with his propellor almost windmilling in the air. After running a length of about four hundred yards in the bed of the Malir river, he hit a soft patch and tipped over his nose, breaking the propeller in two.

Habeeb and his mechanic Corporal Pritam Singh walked a little distance and managed to get a lift in a Jeep from a party of Shikaries coming along a sandy track along the left bank of the river Malir. When they got to R.A.F. Depot Drigh Road, Habeeb reported to the Chief Technical Officer; Wing Commander Full-James who was of the opinion that from an engineering point of view, the aircraft was a write off. But Habeeb insisted that the aircraft was perfectly O.K. All he required was a new propellor and about six gallons of oil, and he would fly it back to Drigh Road. Full-James telephoned to Milne, the station Commander. Milne informed me in 'Q' flight to take my flight Sergeant and a party of men. "Have the propellor changed and put in about six gallons of oil and you fly it back". Thereupon I asked my British Flight Sergeant, Cooper and a party of men to accompany me to the spot where Habeeb had force landed.

After a long drive we came to the spot where the Hart was standing up on her nose with the tail vertically up, in the air. The party of men immediately got going in throwing ropes at the tail, which was brought down. They were busy in changing the propellor and replenshing engine oil. I proceeded to examine a little more firm portion of the bed of the Malir river.

It appeared to me terribly soft and unfit for a take off. The engine had ceased up. It is quite a shaky affair to get full revolutions from a ceased up engine. One could write volumes in praise of Rolls Royace engines and British Aeronautical engineers.

The aircraft had to be flown back as it was exceedingly difficult to dismantle it in the bed of a river. After changing the propellor and replenshing of oil; Rabbani, Baber and flight Sergeant Cooper turned the engine a little before starting. It was very pleasing to see that it started on the first kick. After testing engine revolutions, oil pressure, temperature etc, Flight Sergeant put his two thumbsup and switched off. We removed all the baggage etc. and made the aircraft thoroughly light. Then we pushed it about fifty yards to a slightly more firm part of the sandy bed of Malir river. I got in with my parachute and started up the engine. After testing both magnetoes I revved up the engine till I could not hold her on the brakes. I released the brakes and let her run forward under full revolutions of the engine. In fact I strained the engine passed the throttle gate. She lifted beautifully from the bed of the river. I headed straight for Drigh Road as the engine did not sound too good. Flight Sergeant Cooper, Rabbani and Baber, Sergeant Ram Singh and F/O Habeebullah Khan were expecting me to turn round and wave out to them. But I had my eyes glued on the engine revolutions temperature, and oil pressure gauges.

That day Air Marshal Sir Joubert De La Ferte was staying in Group Captain Milne's house. He was on his way to U.K. where he was to take over as A.O.C.-in-C. Fighter Command. Air Marshal Sir Joubert, Group Captain Milne and Mrs. Milne were having tea in the C.O's lawn when I turned up overhead. That night was a guest night. Air Marshal Joubert talked to me in the mess "That engine did not sound at all Good. Nice show, you took off from the bed of Malir River". Air Marshal was a great flier himself. He had done more hours on the Hart and Audax than I had done. C.T.O. Wing Commander Full-James was very happy that a Hart had been retrieved in one piece. War was on. There was a general shortage of aircraft. New Blenheims were being pranged at an alarming rate by ferry pilots. Calcutta,

Cawnpore, Delhi, Allahbad and Karachi had been littered with crashed Blenheims. 'Z' flight had crashed two short nose Blenheims. We were exceedingly lucky in 'Q' flight. For a period of thirteen months we carried big bombs slung underneath the bottom main planes, during day and night; in good weather and foul, dust storms; gales, rain and fog. Touch wood. We never scratched a plane or burst a tyre.

F/O Kendall a young R.A.F. Engineer at the Depot was a good friend. Everytime I telephoned to him from the office of ' Q ' flight "Kendall -One of my engines gives a little spluttering when over the Arabian sea, miles away from land". Almost immediately a Rolls Royace Kestrel 1B would arrive at ' Q ' flight hanger for installation and exchange with the ropy engine. Our men would work the whole night. Harjinder Singh. Ram Singh, Baber, Rabbani, Siddique, Jaleel Khan and L. Bala Krishen. By crack of dawn the engine was tested; O . K' d and the aircraft was up in the air on dawn patrol with the navy. It is a fantastic record that over a period of thirteen months, ' Q ' flight I. A. F. maintained six aircraft out of six in a perpetual state of serviceability. It is an open challenge to any I. A. F. or R. P. A. F. Squadron of today to produce a flight which will carry out a long distance dawn patrol of four hours duration with two aircraft in the morning; do an evening and dusk patrol of the same duration with two aircraft; do at least four to six hours additional daily flying practice in dive bombing, gunnery attacks, artillery cooperation interception problems etc. and maintain a serviceability record of six everyday at 6 A. M., for aircraft, pilots and air gunners. Admittedly we had help from our friends in the R. A. F. Depot Drigh Road. In the days of the British rule, if a Carburettor was bad, the whole engine was changed. These days, probably I. A. F. and R. P. A. F. have to think twice before an engine change is considered necessary. Our Warrant Officers, Flight Sergeants, Sergeants, N. C. O.'s and men were magnficent. Never in my life have I seen a bunch of more hard working men; Fitters, riggers, Wireless Operator, Air gunners, Armourers, Photographers; like Kartar Singh, Gurmukh Singh, Nair, Mitra, Sharma, L. Bala- Krishan, P. K. Bala Krishan, Mani Singh, Abdul Salam, Siddique, Jaleel Khan, Baber,

Rabbani, Bhaskaran, Flight Sergeant, Cooper, Sergeant Williams. Sergeant Ram Singh, Sergeant Harjinder, Singh, Harchand Singh Corporal Pritam Singh, Corporal Mahboob and others who will always remain in my memory as stalwarts of I.A.F. who carried out an endless effort for the success of 'Q' flight and whole of the I.A.F.

About June-July 1940, all pilots of I.A.F. carried out a conversion course on short nose Blenheims at Ambala. Mukerjee, Narender, Majumdar, Hem Chowdhury, Bhanj Deo, and a few others fully qualified on Blenheims. Squadron Leader Mckenna and Dick Yubie had put them throgh their paces on Blenheims. Mehar and Habeeb were also recalled to Ambala for converstion on Blenheims. Out of the old crowd only I remaind pinned down as Flight Commander 'Q' flight and could not be spared for conversion.

In August Habeeb came to ferry a Blenheim from Karachi to Ambala. He gave me a flip. What a wonderful aircraft, and what a difference of speed between a Hart, Audax and a twin engined Blenheim. At this time Bristol aircraft firm had sent a twin engined Beaufort aircraft for tropical tests at Karachi. It was a very fine aircraft.

F/LT Mukerjee was asked to go to Egypt with two English boys and ferry three short nose Blenheims from either Cairo or Durban in South Africa. At the same time, Mehar, Habeeb, Hem Chowdhry, and Bhanj Deo commenced ferrying Blenheims from Karachi to Cawnpore, Allahabad, Calcutta and Rangoon.

In August Mukerjee passed through Karachi. I threw a dinner party. Mukerjee as the 1st Squadron Commander of the Indian Air Force was very pleased to meet all the lads of the village at my house. He still held the rank of a F/LT and was of the same seniority as myself.

Mukerjee and the two young English P/O's left by Imperial Airways for Cairo, from where they flew to Durban to collect three Blenheims. In the streets of Durban a white policeman stopped Mukerjee with the remarks "No black man is permitted to walk in the main streets of Durban or anywhere else in South Africa". Mukerjee proteted and showed King's uniform with

two beautiful stripes and a sliver wing pinned on the chest. This cut no ice with the South African policeman. Thereupon the two English boys came to Mukerjee's rescue and argued very strongly with the white policeman. They argued "F/LT Mukerjee has entered the Buckingham Palace and was decorated by King George VI during his coronation. Why can't he walk along a stupid little dirty street of Durban". Still the reply was "No". The three of them left the main street; It is very creditable how the two young English boys stood by the side of Mukerjee. This was the status of a King's Commissioned Indian Officer of his Majesty's No. 1 Squadron Indian Air Force, in a dominion of the same King; a dominion which we so fondly called the British Empire. It is most interesting to say that only a few months previously, Government of India and Air H.Q. had appointed a South African, Squadron Leader Smith to command an Indian Squadron of the Air Force. Squadron Leader Smith in his own native country South Africa probably would have been carrying out farming. But Government of British India appointed him Squadron Commander over the heads of all senior Indian officers who knew far more about air force flying than Squadron Leader Smith did.

Mukerjee told this story of being forbidden to walk in the main street of Durban, to me when he returned back with the Blenheims to Karachi.

During the months of April and May 1940, Air H.Q. with Group Captain Bussell in charge of training, sent a party of twenty British Air gunners to be trained by 'Q' flight. This was a singular honour for I.A.F. to train British personnel. This had a direct bearing on Group Captain Bussell's faith in the Indian Air Force. There was a general letter to all squadrons of the Royal Air Force asking for technical hands to volunteer for Air gunner's post for Whitley and Wellington Squadrons of the Royal Air Force. This letter came to 'Q' flight also. I called up flight Sergeant, Cooper and also all British ranks posted to the Indian Air Force. I read out the letter from A.H.Q. and also an intelligence report from a war summary describing an R.A.F. raid over certain parts of Europe and a long range reconnaissance flight by three squadrons of Whitleys and Wellington bombers

over Vienna on a bright moonlit night. I spoke for about ten minutes on the beautiful scenery that pilots, air gunners and air crews see from the air. Flight Sergeant Cooper quite rightly explained the views of the British technical personnel. He said "War was fought not only from the air, but from the ground also. Millions of technical hands working day and night on getting aircraft ready for flight in squadrons, and millions of other working in factories in turning out aircraft for the Royal Air Force were carrying out as important a job of work as pilots and air gunners and wireless operators". This was in fact quite true. Fifteen minutes later when the Chai Walla (tea man from the R.A.F. Canteen) brought a few hot mugs of chai and cakesoutside in the verandah of 'Q' flight offices, we all came out to have some tea. Prithipal, Arjan, Ravi, Goyal, Janjua, Atam Nanda, Burhanuddin and I stood in the verandah with a mug of chai and some cakes. Airmen on the tarmac were having some tea. Mehar Singh and Habeeb had gone back to Ambala for Blenheim conversion and dealing with a little trouble on the North West Frontier again. We asked British Flight Sergeant Cooper to have a mug of cha. He joined us. I jokingly asked him "Would you ask any of our British Personnel to see the twinkling lights of Vienna in the moonlight." He replied "These men like Sergeant Hall and Corporal Cunningham are very good Wireless Operators. They have already volunteered to leave a ground job and take up flying with the Indian Air Force. This is a very good war effort. Seeing twinkling lights of Vienna in the moonlight and being in a wooden box next morning would not appeal to me". We all laughed aloud. British personel always have a tremendous sense of humour. During Xmas time, big Christmas gift parcels had been received from the Air Ministry London under the name 'Jock boxes for Scottish personnel,' A letter was received from C.O.R.A.F. Depot stating that all Scottish personnel were to report to the Adjutant R.A.F. Depot Drigh Road for collecting a Jock's box. This aroused some interest and during a tea interval when Burhan and Mehar were also listening to the conversation I asked Flight Sergeant Cooper 'What was a Jock's box'? He laughed and said he knew what was a Jock's strap but he had no idea what was a Jock's

box. Probably it had something to do with a Jock in the same way as a sportsman's strap. He volunteered to call Corporal Cunningham who was a Scotsman. We asked Corporal Cunningham about a Jock's box. He did not have a clue to a Jock's box. Eventually he thought that it could never be anything like a Jock's strap but may be in the form of an Xmas gift. There was loud laughter. I asked Corporal Cunningham whether a change of name would qualify me for a Jock's box in which case I was prepared to affix a Mac in front of my name and change into Mac Awan. But the colour would give me away. There was loud laughter from every one.

For two full months, the British Air Gunners selected by A.H.Q. from various R.A.F. units in India flew with us for air firing on ground and air targets. Ground targets were fixed in the South Western corner of the aerodrome at Drigh Road. Extreme left hand target was almost in the bed of the Malir river. Two aircraft flying line astern used to fire on these targets simultaneously. We towed our own drogue out to sea. Throughout the day air firing programme used to continue. In two months time I.e. during April and May we trained practically all the British Air gunners sent to us by A.H.Q. Some of these men like Lac White, Corporal Beedle, Lac Gibon, A.C. Edgar, Ac Dibble, Lac Laughland, Lac Seddar, Corporal Bradbarry, AC Clarke, Lac McLukie, Lac Kelly, Lac Hamet, Lac Gaytor, Lac Crooke, AC Hogg, Corporal Isbister and Corporal Fowler, gained very good results and must have done exceedingly well in R.A.F. Squadrons in the far East or in Europe and England.

Our daily reconnaissance patrols with the Royal Indian Navy and the coastal battery R.A. Manora continued. Two dawn sorties left the aerodrome at about half an hour before dawn and at 4.30 P.M. every day. One day F/O Gaynor and Australian posted to T and D. flight (Test and Despatch) and P/O Arjan Singh of 'Q' flight were having a terrific argument on who was a better pilot. The heated argument eventually ended up in a challenge from both sides to roll a Hart fully loaded up with two 250 lb bombs, and machine guns and wireless etc. Here I had to intervene with the remark "Gentlemen, there will be nothing of the kind as far as my aeroplanes are concerned". Six months later,

poor Gaynor was killed in carrying out low diving attacks on a battalion of the Frontier Force regiment, in a practice near Kohat by the side of a road next to Lachi landing ground.

F/O Gaynor dived too low above the heads of the ground troops who were practicing ack ack cover and firing on diving aircraft. Gaynor hit about a dozen of Pathan troops with his under carriage and chopped their heads off, leaving his undercarriage behind on the main Kohat Road. His aircraft, a Hart returned back to Kohat aerodrome and looked like a catapulted seaplane without an under carriage. F/O Gaynor was so badly shaken up after killing about a dozen troops that he stalled at about twenty feet when landing the aircraft at Kohat aerodrome and was killed on the spot.

In the month of August 1940 a batch of I.A.F. navigators that had passed out from the flying school at Risalpur were posted by A.H.Q. (Group Captain Bussell) to Q flight for carrying out advanced interception problems. P/O Jali, Lodhi, Thomas, Mukerjee, Atma Ram, Etc. flew with us for a whole month. Their instructor had laid out some most interesting navigational problems ending up with interception exercises. One of us used to set a southerly course from Cape Monz and the second fellow with the navigator under training used to calculate a proper course to steer and the time taken to intercept this aircraft when starting off from the R 101 hanger. In one exercise, I was amazed with the accuracy of calculation, when the navigator under training, P/O Atma Ram or P/O Jali, told me to steer a course of 255 for 23 minutes at a height of 8,000 feet- and sure as anything I intercepted P/O Goyal steering a Southerly course from Cape Monz; miles out at sea. Those days, the poor navigator calculated his wind speed and direction by means of C.S.B.S. (Course setting bomb Sight) which was probably used in the first world war of 1914-18.

P/O Jali was a nice boy but he had a little difficulty with a pilot boy, P/O Naranjan Prasad who was at the same time undergoing pilot's training at Risalpur. Naranjan was an infantier and was a 2nd Lieutenant in a Pathan regiment at Bara fort when war broke out. He volunteered to be seconded to the Indian Air Force at the same time as 2nd Lieutenant Mohinder Singh

Verdi had been sent to a Scottish F.T.S. for pilot's training.

P/O Jali used to listen to all the talk of the Indian officers and then used to go and tell some of the stories to British seniors in the mess. This was not liked by the cadets and officers under training. One day Naranjan Prasad told Jali to lay off this game but somehow Jali could not refrain from telling stories. So one day they laid a trap for Jali and took him to the swimming pool at the officers mess. They threw him into the pool and then sat on him. The poor man could only swim like a brick. He was very nearly drowned, and was taken to the station hospital for treatment against nervous shock etc. There was a disciplinary case against P/O Naranjan Prasad but in such cases, nothing happens when a bunch of boys are together.

At this time 2nd Lieutenant Mohinder Singh Verdi was undergoing flying training at an advanced F.T.S. in Scotland. One day his British instructor gave him a training aircraft and told him "Mr. Singh, I would like to see you upside down and downside up, several times over the aerodrome. I shall stand on the ground in front of my hanger and watch you". So Mr. Singh disappeared in a yellow trainer and turned up over the aerodrome some where in Scotland at a height of five thousand feet. Just as Mr. Singh Verdi arrived over the aerodrome at a height of five thousand feet in order to please his instructor with a few downside up stunts, one of Herman Goering's faithful disciples also decided to turn up at this aerodrome at about eight thousand feet in a Heinkel aircraft. Mr. Singh had hardly commenced his franks when the air raid siren went and everyone took shelter in a slit trench including Mr. Singh Verdi's noble instructor in a flying overall. Ack Ack guns from the army and air force ground defences fired a salvo which went past Mr. Singh's trousers within a few yards. Mr. Singh however did not notice the shells, and continued with his aerobatics. C.O. of the ack ack battery ordered his guns to stop and everyone looked up in the air from the slit trenches. The Heinkel was busy taking vertical photographs of the aerodrome and making notes on his reconnaissance report. Mr. Singh not having enough air experience did not notice one salvo of Ack ack shells and continued with his stunts. After half an hour of down

side up and upside down; he decided to come down and was astonished to find the aerodrome in a deserted coudition. When he came out of the aircraft after switching off; his instructor popped his head out of a slit trench and shouted "Come here-you-bloody fool! Didn't you see that Heinkel just above you"? "No Sir" was the reply "I saw no Heinkel near me".

Early in September 1940, fiive Indian Coast defence flight were formed. Officers, aircraft and personnel turned up in full number. These flights were called I.A.F.V.R. flights for coast defence. Hem Chowdhry commanded No. 1 flight at Calcutta. This flight had two Blenheims, one Lockheed Hudson and two Wapitis. F/O Mehar Singh was posted as adjutant to the Calcutta coast defence flight. F/LT Russel commanded Bombay flight. F/LT Sprawson commanded Karachi flight. F/O Habeebullah Khan was posted as Adjutant to Bombay flight. F/O Rup Chand became Adjutant of Karachi flight. Similarly Madras and Cochin flights were also fully formed. At this time P/O Surjit Singh Majithia and P/O Rup Chand had also returned back after obtaining wings from an F.T.S. at Habbaniyah, and were posted to No. 1 squadron Ambala.

Wo had some fun with the boys of the new Coast Defence flight. Raja Ram, Sita Ram, Mansukhani, Lodhi, Rup Chand and Sprawson were the first arrivals. Immediately their four Wapiti aircraft arrived we gradually handed over coast defence work to them. It was really nice to see them off with a heavy bomb load etc, heading towards the sea.

We were very sorry to be preparing to say good bye to the navy and coast defence gunners of the R.A. Orders came from No. 1 Squadron, signed by F/LT Mukerjee to get ready for army cooperation duties as there was trouble on the frontier again. Tribesmen had gone Bolshy again seeing that all squadrons of the Royal Air Force had disappeared towards Singapore and Malaya and the Indian squadron and five coast defence flights were busy in Naval Cooperation at Karachi, Bombay, Cochin, Trichnopoly, Madras, Cuttuck and Calcutta.

We made our aircraft light after the V.R's took over duties of coast defence. An aerobatics programme used to be laid every morning in order to get ready for

Frontier operations in Waziristan. Everyone went through a programme of strenuous aerobatics. Within a few days we could almost do everything with a Hart or an Audax in throwing these about the skies. Our volunteer reserve friends used to be very much pleased with our performance.

Orders came from No. 1 Squadron posting F/O Ravinder Singh to the I.A.F.V.R. Coast defence flight Karachi as an adjutant, Habeeb, Mehar and Ravi-all three went to coast defence flights at Bombay, Calcutta, and Karachi as adjutants.

Just as we were in the process of handing over coast defence duties; Group Captain Milne received a coded message from Naval H.Q. Karachi that a British sloop was on the way from Bombay to Karachi and must be safely escorted. Italian Submarines had lately been active in the Persian gulf and the Arabian sea. One Italian submarine had its coning tower shot off by a converted ship of the Royal Indian Naval volunteer Reserve. This was a real humurous story that came out in the war intelligence summaries issued by the Services Head Quarters Simla/Delhi. It read as follows:-

"An Indian converted light merchant ship was on patrol work in the Persian gulf. In the middle of the Persian gulf, an Italian submarine emerged out of water within four hundred yards of the converted merchantman and signalled to the ship to surrender. At this time, the Persian gulf was infested with Italian submarines which used to operate from Italian Somaliland and East African bases etc. This was a bolt from the blue. Captain of the Merchant ship thought; he had his chips! The gunnery officer was a smart fellow. He thought a submarine at four hundred yards was a sitting bird before she could discharge her torpedoes. So just as all hands were preparing to assemble on the deck in preparing for murder by the submarine at four hundred yards where she could have fired two torpedoes straight into the belly of the ship, gunnery officer took advantage of the general chaos prevailing on board the ship. Quickly he swung his camouflaged 4" gun towards the centre of the Italian submarine and fired. At such a close range even a fool could not have missed the submarine. The first shot took the coning tower- completely off. This shook the submarine

so much that it very nearly capsized. The game was completely reversed. Italian crews came outside the submarine and surrendered. A further machine gun burst was put up above the heads of the Italian prisoners of war in order to demoralize them completely. The Indian ship put a tow line across to the smashed up submarine and towed it to the nearest sea port in the Persiad Gulf".

This was one of the most humourous stories of the last war 1939-45 in the Indian theatre of war. Actually a gross mistake was made by the Commander of the Italian submarine. He must have been under the impression that the Merchantman carried no guns on board. In fact there was a 4" gun, both in the front and rear. These guns were so nicely camouflaged that it must have astonished the Italians to find that their coning tower was blown off.

Group Captain Milne being an ex. Naval Officer was very keen that the British sloop be escorted properly. For two days we and Blenheims of 'Z' flight searched all over the sea between Karachi and half way to Bombay but there was no clue of the British sloop. This annoyed Milne so much that he almost began to show open signs of anger. Forty eight hours had passed from the proper E.T.A. of the sloop. We gave up the search on the third day much to the annoyance of Group Captain Milne. Other things had to be done also. On the morning of the fouth day when I had taken off with P/O Prithipal Singh for a dawn patrol with H.M.I.S. Bhadravati and H.M.I.S. Natravati; I saw the sloop gliding towards Keamari past Manora break water. I immediately sent a coded reconnaissanee message to R.A.F. Drigh Road. "For attention Group Captain Milne. A sloop is gliding past Manora break water. It appears that this is the sloop we were searching for three days for escort duties". Group Captain telephoned to Keamari and after that he never mentioned a word.

One day's interesting reconnaissance and practice attack story I have forgoten to mention during the previous month of August-September 1940.

Royal Indian Navy were very keen to have a combined exercise which would incorporate the following:-

(1) Shadowing of an enemy ship.
(2) Despatch of an operational message to Drigh Road.
(3) Arrival of four 'Q' flight aircraft.
(4) Dive bombing attacks delivered by 'Q' flight aircraft.

In this mock battle H.M.I.S. St. Anthony was to act as enemy ship, It was arranged that maximum ack-ack firing practice was to be obtained by the crews of St. Anthony on low diving aircraft.

The exercise went off beautifully. A W/T message sent the location of H.M.I.S. Ramdas and that of the enemy ship which was on a bearing of 312° and a distance of eight miles from Ramdas. The exercise was carried out at a distance of at least eighty miles from Manora. We came on a direct track to our ship and then changed course to the enemy ship. I ordered the formation of four Audaxes to form an echelon to the right. Then we dived one by one on the enemy ship and pulled away after delivering a mock attack. Mehar was number 4 in the formation. His dive was the best and it impressed the Navy quite a lot. I must say that the billowing waves of the Arabian sea produce quite a demoralizing effect when pulling out of a steep dive. This was the most realistic exercise we ever did with the Navy. We fully realized a wonderful job of work which was being carried out by the R.I.N. with small ships; and the Navy fully appreciated the usefulness of the I.A.F; even though equipped with obsolete types of aircraft which could carry only 2X250 lb bombs.

At last the time came to pack up and say good bye to the Navy, the Gunners, and the R.A.F. Depot Drigh Road. On that guest night Group Captain Milne said a few very kind words for the 'Q' flight I.A.F. I had to reply and thank Group Captain Milne and all officers of the R.A.F. particularly F/O Kendall who was so helpful in changing our Rolls Royace Kestral 1. B. engines whenever I telephoned to him.

On the morning of 1st October 1940 I led 'Q' flight with six Harts and Audaxes flown by F/O Janjua, F/O Atam Nanda F/O Burhanuddin, P/O Goyal and P/O Manchanda back to Ambala our parent unit. A large crowd of the I.A.F. consisting of officers and men of the

Karachi coast defence flight I.A.F.V.R. had assembled on the apron to wave goodbye to us. I remembered the days when F/LT Bouchier stood on the apron with the rest of the squadron when we took off for Peshawar with Phllip Haynes on 1st April 1936.

At Ambala Mukerjee as the 1st Squadron Commander was there to greet us. Our ground party arrived next day by train. My wife and the infant boy were also travelling with the ground party. How happy we were to be back again in our home, Ambala. Only after a few days we realized what a tremendous amount of work we had done at Karachi and what a record of efficiency in flying, operations and serviceability had been set for the future squadrons of I.A.F. and R.P.A.F. to look back to with pride.

The name of 'Q' flight will stand in the history of I.A.F. and RPAF as a glorious chapter of hard work and success. On return to Ambala 'Q' flight lost its identity and became once again 'A' flight No. 1 Squadron I.A.F.

After a year's hard work we deserved some leave. All of us disappeared. When I returned back after leave I found that our hanger had been taken away by the expanding A.F.T.S. (Advanced flying training school). Both hangers were full of training aircraft; Harts and Audaxes. A modification had been carried out and the tail skid of a Hart and Audax was replaced by a tail wheel. The aerodrome was chock-a-block with taxying and lading aircraft. Poor 1. Squadron was pushed out near the M.T. garages. All aircraft were parked in front of garages. Squadron office, flight commander's office, Pilot's room, almost every office was located in the garages. Wing Commander Horsley had gone. He was posted to a wing in the middle East. Group Captain Sutherland took over Command of Air Force station Ambala.

It needed a tremendous amount of effort to wheel out one of our aircraft from a picketed position in front of the station garages to the tarmac for starting up. The aerodrome was crowded with trainees all over the circuit. Squadron aircraft could not be mixed up with training aircraft. Chief Constructional Engineer from A.H.Q. New Delhi arrived to see the

lack of accomodation. Mukerjee was away on leave in Calcutta. So I took the Chief Constructional Engineer and showed him condition of the Squadron aircraft and flight offices. I still remember that Group Captain Southerland brushed the palm of his right hand on the bottom main plane of one of our Audaxes. His hand was literally burried in dust. Generally, I.A.F. specialized in keeping their aircraft in a clean condition. Plenty of soap and brush and brasso for metal shine was used. But in the parked condition outside in the open, fine dust from hundreds of aircraft taking off and landing during day and night, settled a thick and ever increasing layers of dust all over the aircraft. Group Captain Southerland was keen on having a third big hanger built for us. But when the Chief Constructional Engineer returned back to A.H.Q. Air Marshal Sir Philip Playfair A.O.C. in-C Air Forces in India decided to move us to Peshawar. There had been some trouble on the N.W.F.P. again. When the British Governor of N.W.F.P. visited the tribes in Waziristan, they openly told him to settle the score with uncle's son Hitler, before settling the issue in Wazirstan. All the R.A.F. Squadrons had gone. Therefore Air H.Q. decided to move No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. to the Frontier as we had specialized in tribal punishment and knew our brothers the tribesmen, very well indeed. We knew how to play hide and seek with them and when to lash out a kick.

At the time; some of the really bright boys were undergoing instruction at the advanced flying training school. Jaswant Singh, Naranjan Prasad, Reporter, Billimoria. Allahabad, etc. were in the batch. Wing Commander Simpson used to be exceedingly strict with the boys but P/O Reporter would have no nonsense from Simpson. One day when Simpson as C.F.I. was almost pulling his hair in rage; Reporter gently told him, "Look here sir, you have other fifty of your I.A.F. donkeys and sheep with you to shout at. I am neither a donkey nor a sheep. I can hear you quite well without shouting". Reporter was the only man Simpson was frightened of. Being a very methodical old instructor from C.F.S. Wittering; Simpson used to turn up every night, half an hour before the night flying programme and used to repeat a very monotonous lecture over and over

again. This story was told to me by Billie Bilgrame. One night Simpson was standing near the illuminated taxying post giving the same old lecture to the boys under training. Half an hour later Reporter turned up on his bicycle, whistling away like a happy lark. "You are damned late-Mr. Reporter" shouted Wing Commander Simpson (British C.F. 1). "No Sir" was the reply "I am dead on time. Flying has not commenced as yet and as far as your sermon is concerned, it is the same every night. I can repeat it word by word". This annoyed Wing Commander Simpson who almost growled "Alright-repeat what I said". So reporter, funnily enough repeated all the words from memory inspite of the fact that he was not there....."Start up your engine and test your mag drop. Taxy up gently to the taxing post. Halt and flash your identification letter. Acknowledge the green light by clamping on your top and bottom lights. Taxy up gently to No. 1 flare and look round. If all is clear, roll forward gaining speed gently. Then open the throttle fully and see that your nose points to the centre of the T, at the top. After take off keep in your tramlines for at least two minutes before turning left. Come down wind and check that the circuit is clear". Everyone roared with laughter because the words were exactly the same as those of Wing Commander Simpson.

In the Indian Air Force a brave man has never survived. Bhupinder Singh, Amarjit, Sircar, Habeeb, Majumdar, Mehar Singh were some of he bravest pilots we had. Rippie Reporter had tremendous amount of guts and courage. Wing Commander Simpson used to tell him "Reporter-you will either win a D.F.C. or you will find the wooden box". Rippie Reporter was killed in January 1944 when beating up Japanese machine gun and troop positions at Bawli Bazar in Arakan. His Hurricane aircraft was riddled with machine gun bullets from the ground and fell upside down in a marsh where our ground troops could not just get there. The aircraft lay upside down with the dead body of reporter still in the cockpit, for a period of months behind the Japanese lines. It was the most demoralizing sight for any Indian pilot returning back from an operational sortie in Arakan, to look at Rippie in such a position. A brave son of the soil whose name will always be remembered. On many

occasions I tried to have a look at Rippie lying upside down in a Marsh in Arakan during January-June 1944, but I never had a chance of seeing the dead comrade as I was being persued by Jap. Zero fighters, low down in the Buthidaung valley.

Rippie Reporter was a good friend. During his training days at Ambala in January 1941 he, Satya Narayan and Anant Narayan called on us. We had a bungalow on Northbrook road Ambala Cantt. My wife asked them to dinner and then we took them out shooting black buck. Rippie was always full of humour and used to laugh his guts out.

We made up a big shooting party. At least ten of the young P/O's under training at the A.F.T.S. accompanied us. We spotted a big herd of black buck. I advised the shooting party to make a circle round the herd from about a mile away and then commence converging to the centre. Rifles were not to be used as there was danger of shooting each other. Shot guns with S.G. Catridges were to be used. As luck would have it P/O Jungu Engineer was next to me in the circling movement. Poor fellow was under the impression that black buck with long horns probably was a dangerous animal and would attack a human being from close quarters. As the circle became closer and closer one or two of the older black buck smelling danger tried to escape. There were approximately two thousand black buck and does within the circle. Rippie could not avoid the temptation of a lovely black buck running away at close quarters and let loose with a .305 with telescopic sight. The shot frightened the entire flock so much that they stampeded in one direction. Seeing Anant Narayan popping his head out of a bush, the whole flock turned back and came out at a terrific gallop to where Jungu Engineer and I were lying behind the bush at a little distance from each other. The stampede of the wild animals was so majestic in the virgin territory of Patiala state that I was spell bound but kept my body well concealed behind a bush and kept my shot gun ready. The whole herd came up at a terrific gallop taking beautiful leaps over smaller bushes. The entire herd came to where Jungu lay behind a large bush, watching them with fright. The herd came dead on top of him. A big

black one in the lead of the herd took a clean leap over the bush where Jungu lay. This was enough for Jungu who was so frightened that he left his position and gun and ran out in the open in utter panic and fright of the big animals. He ran hell for leather towards the right. Then he saw a big black animal halt in front of him. This frightened Jungu so much that he ran left towards me and picked up a sheet which was being used by him for lying down. He commenced waving this sheet in front of the animals in order to frighten them away. I laughed so much that I have never laughed in my life. I forgot my shot gun and rifle and was bent down with laughter. In a few seconds Rippie came trotting up from the other side and enquired why we did not fire. I pointed towards Jungu and told the story. Rippie was literally doubled up with laughter.

In February 1941 we received orders for No. 1 Squadron to proceed to Karachi for the armament training camp. We had done so much practice during 1939-40 when carrying out duties with 'Q' flight on coast defence that exceedingly good results were obtained. In an astern attack, Mehar Singh burst up the red cone when he put a concentrated burst of front machine gun fire. Mukerjee was still on leave in Calcutta, so I led No. 1 Squadron in the armament camp. We left Ambala with ten Hart and Audax aircraft. On the previous day I had informed all the boys in the pilots room to prepare their maps for flight and also bring their breakfast with them as it was exceedingly difficult to obtain good breakfast at Jodhpur due to the over crowding of transit pilots of the R.A.F. Jockingly I told P/O Das and P/O Raza, still keeping a serious face "Gentlemen-please do not forget to bring your rain coats in case we fetch up at Chirapoonji". This was one of my standard jokes in the I.A.F. as a senior most flight Commander. All the boys knew this joke, when we were leaving for any long cross country. There was loud laughter from Arjan, Prithipal, Goyal, Janjua, Verdi, Burhan, Atam Nanda and Narender. But P/O Das and P/O Raza did not get the joke. Next morning Das and Raza turned up at the aerodrome with large size rain coats. Every one laughed. Even the airmen knew the joke.

Brave men never live long. In the year 1942 F/O Das popularly nick named Dasu by his comrades was ferrying a short nose Blenheim from Allahabad to Dum Dum Calcutta. After take off the aircraft blew up in the air at a little distance from the runway. At that time I was posted to Air H.Q. India as Squadron Leader Training and operations for the Indian Air Force. I received a little black card from Dasu's mother and sister. This was written in Bengali. I made a Bengali clerk translate that for me and was really shocked to hear about the death of a good officer and a brave man who died so young. Dasu had served in my squadron for nearly two years. He would have been a great asset to the I.A.F. today.

In the Armament camp at Drigh Road in January 1941 No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. got the maximum marks in front and rear gun firing. All R.A.F. crews in India attended this armament training camp. Many of the famous R.A.F. squadrons in India like 28, 20, 5, 31, 60, 27 etc. etc. were in disintegrated forms all over the countryside between Singapore and Bombay. Every squadron and coast defence flight came to Karachi to be put through their paces in front gunnery, rear gunnery and bombing. Karachi armament training camp was the testing place for the worthiness of Air Force Squadrons. During our days of training in England; the annual armament training camp at North Coates Fittes used to be a testing ground for all squadrons of the Royal Air Force. Those days some of the bomber, fighter and army cooperation squadrons used to be equipped with Hyderabad, Vickers Virginia, Armstrong Atlas, Hawker Hart, Audax, Fury, Nimrod, Fairy Fox and Bristol Buldog aircraft.

During the armament camp we started off with air to ground firing both with Vickers (G.O.) guns and rear Lewis guns. Within two days we were on to air to air firing on sleeve, drogue, and cone On the first day Mehar Singh burst the red cone by putting on a terrific concentrated front gun fire. Although we carried two Vickers gas operated machine guns (.303) with a rate of fire of 900 rounds per minute; we were permitted to fire only with one gun and a belt of 100 rounds of .303 ammunition. I must say that the tow pilots like F/LT Young and others were very friendly with us and

permitted us to come a little nearer to the drogue, sleeve and cone as compared to previous years where red very lights painted the sky before any pilot could get to within a hundred yards of the drogue. Years of experience with Philip's continuous grumbling had made us more wily. We never fired till the drogue almost filled more than half of the telescopic front gun sight. And our gun sights were not modern by any chance. We had to get used to them.

Immediately after Mehar had blown up the small cone to smithreens in the Vickers Astern Attack; Jungu Engineer after putting up such a horrible show in the black buck shooting at Ambala; put so many bullets on the drogue in the Vickers Quarter test that the instructors of the R.A.F. thought that Indian pilots were either too damn good or they were cheating. In the afternoon, P/O Dasu and P/O Surjit Singh Majithia got above the average results on the drogue. We kept up the firing for sen days. The R.A.F. instructors nodded in applause. The credit went to the R.A.F. because after all we had learnt tricks of the trade from the R.A.F. Philip's continuous grumblings during 1936, 1937 and 1938 had made us brave enough to get near to the drogue. The whole trick in air firing is to get near to the target. Good aim from a long distance is of no use in air to air firing.

At the end of ten days, our scores were better than all the squadrons of the Royal Air Force in India. I was exceedingly happy to know that after all we had come up to the standard of the Royal Air Force. The words of Sir John Steele A.O.C.-in-C India during February 1934 when F/O Sircar had crashed into a battalion of the 4/10th Baluch regiment and was court martialled out of the I.A.F. rang in my ears, as fresh as in February 1934!. "Many a night have I lain awake thinking of you. When a few of you get together-I do not know what you do. If things do not work out properly, you may have to join your friends. There is only one standard and that is the standard of the Royal Air Force". We listened to this speech as a fatherly advice and never considered it as a bad thing. During later years when Sir John Steele had gone we used the phrase 'Join your friends' as a great historical

joke of the I.A.F.; connected with Sir John's famous speech and a raspberry to the eight bogrates of the Indian Air Force.

During the armament camp of January 1941, I was commanding No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. as F/LT Mukerjee was still on leave in Calcutta. It gave me terrific pleasure and pride to have commanded No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. and to have led them in the air firing to such glorious results. I repeat here that our success and top position in air firing and bombing was due to tricks of the trade learnt from our brothers in the Royal Air Force. Without their teachings, these results would never have been achieved.

On the last day, the squadron had to send a representative for high altitude level live bombing from a height of 10,000 feet above sea level. Everyone was dying to have a crack at this. Mehar, Arjan, Prithipal, Janjua, Jungu Engineer, Dasu were all dying to have a crack at live bombing. The competition was so strong that eventually I had to interfere and show my two stripes. "Gentleman, I as the senior most flight commander and as acting Squadron Commander will represent No. 1 Squadron in the inter squadron competitive live bombing". They all smiled. They also agreed that Wali Mohd as the oldest and most experienced Air Gunner should accompany me as a team of two.

We took off in a Hart with 2 X 112 lb live bombs. I climbed to a height of 10,000 feet. Target in the form of a yellow triangle (each side approximately 50 yards) was placed in the sea at a distance of two miles West of Manora. We calculated wind speed and direction by making two or three runs in different directions over the coastline. Wali Mohd had calculated W.S. and D. and placing red on red of the C.S.B.S. (Course Setting Bomb Sight), he asked me to proceed to the target and make a run from any direction. In our time gyroscopic compasses were not fitted in aircraft. Southerly course over the target was the most advisable on an antiquated P4 compass. Wali Mohd had made the two bombs on either wing, nose and tail live. Our medium of inter communication used to be an ordinary Gosport tube and not radio telephony. Wali Mohd was lying on his stomach well towards the tail portion of the fuselage. Bottom

panel was fully opened up with Wali Mohd's head protruding over the course setting bomb sight and the drift wires. I spoke to Wali Mohd down the Gosport tube "I am making a trial run over the target on a course of 180° M. Do not be in a hurry to release the bombs. Select any of the runs and when satisfied; release the bombs". The answer was "Very good, Sir". I continued to receive corrections from the air gunner Wali Mohammad. "Right-right-left-steady-steady steady-steady". and then "Bombs gone Sir". I was amazed. "What-on the 1st run?" "Yes Sir, the run was so beautiful that I could not resist the temptation and released salvo of 2X112 lbs G.P's". What confidence our air gunners and bomb aimers used to have! I had felt the jerk as the bombs were released. I quickly put the aircraft in a steep turn and looked vertically below. Both bombs hit the western side of the yellow triangle at a distance of about 15-20 yards. This was considered very accurate level bombing with primitive bomb sights like C.S.B.S. and with light two seater aircraft like a Hawker Hart and with old type of instruments registering tremendous error. An altitude of 10,000 feet was also pretty high for aircraft of those days. Generally we carried out level bombing in Waziristan at an height of approximate 6,000 ft above the valley.

Our hit of 25 yards from target was confirmed by the armament observation posts. I was convinced that if we had carried eight bombs; with Wali Mohd as bomb aimer, we could have easily put three inside the yellow triangle. The boys were very pleased that as representatives of No. 1 Squadron we had put up a good show.

On this day it so happened that it was a religious holiday for the non scheduled castes in Karachi. A very big crowd of untouchables and non-scheduled castes had assembled at Manora to immerse the image of a Godess in the sea. When the 2X112 G.P's fell and exploded west of Manora, it created a general stampede among the untouchables. They thought a German surface raider had turned up and commenced the shelling of Manora. Within a few seconds there wasn't a soul to be seen at Manora. This created a panic at Keamari also and people began to flee till eventually a few naval

ratings pointed to a friendly Hart overhead returning back to Drigh Road.

During war time there were innumerable incidents where panic was created in the minds of the uneducated public. At Ambala at the commencemeut of the second world war, Deputy Commissioner Shri Nagesh had laid on a passive air defence scheme for the citizens of Ambala City. By a system of loud speakers and beat of drums it was announced to illiterate masses of Ambala City that four different combinations of the scream of air raid sirens with short and long blasts combined into coarse or shrill sounds will indicate enemy bombers overhead, bombers past, all clear or take long shelter with feod and water. The scheme was made into a realistic exercise. So on a pitch dark night four Blenheims, short nose bombers of the British No. 60 squadron roared over head at a low altitude and ack ack machine posts carefully camouflaged under sand bag embankments began to rattle and bark in all directions in the city. This was enough to put the fright of God into the minds of poor uneducated people who thought the Luft Waffe was on top of them. They were not informed that it was a mock battle with a view to testing passive air defences of big towns in India. Stories of Luft Waffe's bombing of London were told by illiterate villagers to others of their kith aud kin. Thousands hid under their beds and never came out. Next morning when Deputy Commissioner Shri Nagesh went to his office he found that there was not a soul in the city courts, and secretariat offices etc. Everyone was still hiding in their house. After a continuous effort throughout the town he managed to get the citizens of Ambala to go about their work.

In Calcutta also when the Japanese entered the War; a big air raid exercise was held. When the Blenheims made a low sweep over Dum Dum airport and the air raid sirens began to scream; one thousand local Bangli coolies working on the construction of runway, bolted. For four days there was no sign of them. The poor contractor stood there pulling his hair. The work had come to a stop. On the fifth day, a batch of coolies was seen loafing around Chowrangi. It was explained to them that it was only a practice

alarm but the coolies would not move and remarked "Practice or no practice. It was so darned realistic that it put the fright of God into us".

When we returned back to Ambala, Mukerjee was exceedingly pleased to know that No. 1 Sqdn. had come up on top in the armament training camp at Drigh Road. We missed Wing Commander Horsley's typicalsmile on such occassions. Group Captain Sutherland had hundred and one problems of the A.F.T.S. and school of technical training. He could not be bothered to congratulate No. 1 Squadron when he was absorbed in his own problems.

Orders came from Air H.Q. New Delhi for 'B' flight to go to Secunderabad for army cooperation. A division. was ready for overseas duties. They were to be given some practice with air attack, cover, and ack ack firing. Mehar Singh led the flight. On the way he fell ill at Kamtee. A spare pilot flew his aircraft along with rest of the 'B' fligbt to Secunderabad. Mukerjee was worried; in case something went wrong at Secunderabad. So I was sent by train to look after the flight till Mehar came out of hospital. We had carried out about four day's full programme with the army. Dasu's sister and a girl friend turned up from Calcutta. They used to accompany us to the pictures in town. On the fourth day Mehar turned up from the hospital and I left for Ambala. The same evening there was a society wedding party leaving by the mail train. I have never seen such a good looking collection of popsies in my life. What beautiful looks! what ornaments and jewellery!

When I returned back to Ambala by train I was informed at the squadron office by F/O Narender who was acting as Adjutant of No. 1 Squadron that A.H.Q. orders had been received for No. 1 Squadron to move up to Peshawar as a permanent station. A.F.T.S. would hardly permit squadron aircraft to fly. It was very cold indeed. We spent the morning time in standing for a short period in the bright sunshine. Stories from the villages of the Punjab were told and everyone laughed. Here is a story from F/O Verdi.

"In a village near the Punjab hills a party of Sikh villagers including men and women were returning back from their fields. Down came a wintry rain and

everyone ran to the nearest shelter which was a cave. Intensity of the rain storm, lightening and thunder with spells of hail stones increased as the evening merged into night fall. It appeared that the party of men and women would have to remain in the cave for the night. So everyone settled down in a selected corner. This party included a half blind youngman and his young wife, an old villager with a large bundle of sugar canes dumped in a corner of the cave, and a few more men and women. When everyone was almost half asleep, the flash of lightening revealed the figure of a tall man entering the cave. From inside the cave, came a gentle whisper "pull it out pull it out". - کھچ لے - کھچ لے

The whisper alarmed the old man with bundle of sugar canes. He immediately replied "Be careful-if any one is thinking of pulling out sugar canes from my bundle, these have been counted up by me and have to be delivered to a certain person in the village".

There was loud applause and laughter for Verdi's story.

On about 28th February 1941 the Squadron moved away to Peshawar on permanent posting. Group Captain Bussell had already planned No. 2 Squadron I.A.F. He had put my name down as O.C. No. 2 Squadron. H.Q. No. 223 Group R.A.F. Peshawar had also recommended my name to A.H.Q.

On the 11th March, there was a big conference in Air Head Quarters. All Squadron Commanders had to attend. I was also asked by Group Head Quarters to reach New Delhi by the evening of 11th. I flew Hart K. 2091 via Lahore and Amabala to New Delhi. Group Captain Bussell was very happy to see me. Air Marshal Sir Philip Playfair gave the inaugural speech in Squadron Commander's conference. Group Captain Biscoe gave his impressions of the German Air raids over the British isles. It was exceedingly interesting to hear a medical man give such a nice description of air raid operations, and counter steps taken by Britain. Then Group Captain Bussell gave an exceedingly interesting talk on training and operations carriedout by all squadrons of the R.A.F. and I.A.F. in India, and further planning for expansion of the I.A.F. to three regular squadrons and five coast defence flights of volunteer reserve which would eventually

merge into the regular organisation of I.A.F. at the termination of war. Air Commodore Wright, Chief of Air staff asked me to lunch at his house on Akbar Road. I stayed at the officers mess R.A.F. Wellingdon Airport New Delhi. I was very happy to have been called up for the conference. Next morning I left early for Peshawar via Ambala and Lahore.

I had to leave for Miranshah next day as there had been some trouble in the Tochi Valley. The British Resident in Waziristan in consultation with the Governor of N.W.F.P. Sir George Cuningham had ordered bombing of Gorwekht mountains where Fakir of Ipi had taken refuge along with his followers. A portion of Wallo Tangi on the right hand bank of Shaktu river had also been proscribed. I had been instructed to form No. 2 Squadron Indian Air Force in the left hand main hanger at Peshawar.

There was hardly any time to be lost as between No. 1 and No. 2 Squadrons we had to look after the operations in Waziristan. There was almost a hundred years war on, with the tribesmen; all for the sake of a woman; Islam Bibi. I left immediately for Miranshah. I loved those hills of the North West Frontier. In fact these are big mountains. Why the British called these 'hills' is not known? I passed low over Fort Lockhart perched on a mountain top. This fort is after the name of a famous British General Lockhart who carried out many expeditions against the Afghans and Pathan tribes. The name Lockhart is as famous as Roberts of Kandhar or General Napier who conqueired the province of Sind for the British in the nineteenth century. Those red roofs of the Cantonment look so pleasing to aviators when going low over the cliff about 8,000 feet above sea level.

At Miranshah I found that the boys were doing very well. F/O Mohinder Verdi had met a little bad luck in making a slightly heavy landing and damaging the undercarriage of an Audax aircraft, but otherwise he was perfectly O.K. and was on an operational sortie the day I arrived at Miranshah. The flight at Miranshah was a mixture of No. 1 and No. 2 squadrons. F/O Naranjan Prasad, P/O Prithipal Singh, F/O Verdi, P/O Das, and I formed the flight. The rest were at Peshawor. P/O Chawla was our Equipment Officer, Captain Johnson I.L.O. and Flight Sergeant Williams was the N.C.O. I/C flight.

Next day bombing of Wallo Tangi started in earnest. Bombing the poor tribesmen after searching and preparing for battle against the German pocket battleships Deutschland and Graf Von Spee was not a very exciting job but knowing fully well that many an R.A.F. and I.A.F. aviator had been shot down when attacking tribesmen low down in the valleys; the thought of being skinned alive was not very pleasing and always sent a cold shiver down the spine when pulling out low in the Wallo Tangi.

Within a few days of my reaching Miranshah, I was standing at the aerodrome talking to my Flight Sergeant when Captain Jhonson our British I.L.O. from the Maharatta Light Infantry came running upto me and said that an army convoy was being attacked just near Mir Ali Camp. I ran inside the hanger and put on my overall and parachute. Our airmen had already started up an Audax on standby duty. Corporal Saleem the air gunner was already in the rear seat and had fixed up his Lewis gun in the scarf ring. I took off towards the East and went just skimming over that little pimple hill located at a distance of one mile East of the aerodrome. On the otherside of the pimple hill was a road leading to Mir Ali camp, from Bannu and Razmak. This was exceedingly brave of the tribesmen to have attacked our convoy from Razmak in such close proximity of Miranshah, the roosting place of birdmen.

Within a short distance from the pimple hill, a convoy of fifty army transport had been stopped by an armed party of Wazirs and was being attacked. I came over the convoy at a very low height of five hundred feet in order to see what was happening. This was a very dangerous altitude. Even at two thousand feet many a British and Indian pilot had been shot down. Mehar Singh and Arjan were shot down by the tribesmen at a fairly good height. I once went over the convoy, did a steep turn and came back on their road position. There was not a soul to bo seen. Everyone was flat on his stomach and behind cover of big boulders. Firing was going on from both sides. Saleem tapped me on the right shoulder and pointed down below. Sure enough there was a battle royal going on. The ground strips indicated heavy firing from the tribal side. The direction

of attack was indicated. There was no time to be lost. I put down bomb at the calculated place. Then a second and a third and a fourth one followed immediately by a sharp burst of front gun fire. Then I asked Saleem to plaster a place where I suspected something had moved. Saleem put up repeated bursts of Lewis gun fire till he was tired. Then I put in two more 14 pounder anti personnel bombs and waited to see the result. I came back over the convoy. By now two armoured cars had arrived on the spot bombed and machine gunned by me. I watched these armoured cars very keenly. At the same time I tuned in my R/T and gave a transmission to the armoured cars. Unfortunately, radio sets of those days, fitted to aircraft; did not work so beautifully as the 118. l R/T sets of today. After calling up the armoured cars several times; I gave up the attempt at radio telephony. The second armoured car with its turret and machine guns pointing Northwards towards the hills was covering the withdrawal of its commrade back to the convoy position. Immediately the two armoured cars joined the convoy, a whole line of M. T. vehicles pushed off towards Mirali and I returned to Miranshah.

Our mess at Miranshah was the only mess in the whole of the Royal Air Force and Indian Air Force which was permitted to keep art pictures of lovely popsies showing beautiful breasts. The anti room and the dining room were full of these pictures. Once Air Marshal Sir Edgar Ludlow Hewitt and Sir Joubert De La Ferte had Visited Miranshah. They saw these pictures but never uttered a word that such nude pictures were not in accordance with King's regulations. In wild places of the North West Frontier and the tribal territory, the only Popsy a person will ever see is on the wall. And we had such a nice collection. Actually it was No. 5 Squadron R. A. F. during the initial stages of the tribal war 1937-1947, that collected these beautiful art pictures. We inherited these from the Royal Air Force and No. 5 Squadron Rawalpindi who spent a solid spell of six months in these wild mountains from May 1937 to November 1937.

A game of Tennis was most enjoyable in the evenings. We always paid a courtesy call on the Tochi

Scouts who were next door. They were exceedingly helpful and also invited us to riding etc. They kept their own horses. We asked them to dinner seveal times.

Naranjan Prasad evolved a new joke. He used to hide up a cat and two small kitten in P/O Chowla's bed when he was away in office. Then he used to remove the cat and little kitten, leaving a very strong smell in Chowla's bed. Then in the evening while resting after Tennis he used to bring his big black Labrador dog and make him smell Chowla's bed. The Labrador used to go wild in smelling cat and kitten and used to pull Chowla's bed down on the ground into bits and then used to drag it all over the place to evcry one's great amusement and laughter.

One evening this joke was shown to me in the absence of poor Chowla. I had no idea that there was a smell of cat and kitten already arranged and left in the bed. I was under the impression that the dog had so cleverly developed a dislike towards poor Chowla, the Stores Officer for the simple reason that Naranjan did not like Chowla and the dog was so cleverly working on a reversal of the popular saying 'like me like my dog'. Next morning P/O Chowla officially reported to me that Naranjan was continuously telling his dog to tear up his bedding. I had to be strict and informed Naranjan not to repeat the stunt again as poor Chowla's bed had been torn to bits. Chowla threatened to shoot Naranjan's Labrador. I assured him that the stunt will not be repeated again.

Animals have always created a difference of opinion and strained feelings in the Air forces. On our move from Ambala to Peshawar and Miranshah, the first flight that came to Miranshah consisted of Aspee, Majumdar, Narender, Janjua, Burhanuddin and Atam Nanda. F/O Burhanuddin prince of Chitral had his Bull terrier Benito and a small wolf cub Wolfie sent by the ground convoy. On the way something went wrong and the wolf cub fell ill, with Benito keeping a continuous watch on him. Half way between Bannu and Miranshah, Aspee ordered the party and a sepoy to shot Wolfie as he was very very ill. Benito leapt into rage and bit two airmen. Thereupon Aspee ordered that Benito should be thrashed in public. This annoyed Benito so much that he was in

a furious temper when the convoy got to Miranshah. F/O Burhanuddin had flown to Miranshah. When he came to know that Wolfie had been shot between Bannu and Miranshah there was no end to Burhan's rage. He brought out his own gun and threatened to shoot Aspee. Mukerjee got so worried that he asked me to go down to Miranshah immediately and control the situation as tempers were running high. Aspee and Burhan's story is exactly the same as that of a British fighter squadron in which F/O Bader set two Bull terrior cubs to fight Batchy Atcherley's lion cub. Bader's bull terriers wounded the lion cub so badly that Atcherly almost brought his gun out. Such situations cropped up in No. 1 and 2 squadrons also but we tackled these gently. On one occasion an R.A.F. officer's delicate cocker spaniel was badly wounded by a brother officer's Bullterrier. He was so annoyed that he disappeared into the hills and bought a wild jungly tribal dog that killed the Bullterrier out right, and in one go. Within a week Benito bit me also on the fore finger. To bite a flight and Squadron Commander was quite a serous thing. Poor Benito had to leave the camp at Miranshah. Burhan sent him to Jandola where his brother Khushwaqt was a platoon commander with the South Waziristan Scouts. With the ground troops Benito was a terrific hero as in a hand to hand fight with the tribesmen Benito used to take the side of his master and attack the tribesmen with tooth and nail. He was a terrific warrior. I have never seen such a big sized Bull Terrier with a terrific head. Only two men could go near him. One was Burhan and the other Mehar Singh. It is peculiar how he developed a liking for a big Sikh like Mehar. At the same time he used to hate the sight of Arjan Singh. I was quite unpopular with him also. He bit me badly. Benito eventually died a warrior's death in his wild wooly home of Chitral. Benito was a great war dog for the Indian Air Force. Whether at Miranshah or at the A.T.C. camp Drigh Road, no outsider could have the courage to enter I.A.F. tents in general and Burhan's tent in particular. One day Burhan showed us some fun at Drigh Road. He made Benito enter P/O Raza and Das's tent. Both of them ran to their beds and climbed on top. Benito would not let them come down for half an hour in

accordance with his master's desire. We all stood outside the tent and laughed, but Benito kept on growling at Raza and Das who were too frightened to come to earth.

In April 1941 No. 2 Squadron was partially formed. There was a scarcity of aircraft. Harts and Audaxes could not be found in the country. Every short nose Blenheim that came into the country was ferried across towards Rangoon, Mandalay and Singapore. Air H.Q. decided to equip No. 2 Squadron with Wapitis. By now there were hardly any spares in the country for Wapiti aircraft. Overhaul was getting more and more difficult. We commenced to collect Wapitis from all corners of India. P/O Surjit Singh Majithia flew a ropy old Wapiti from Calcutta to Peshawar. I waited for nearly one hour and feared that Surjit had forced landed somewhere. Then Surjit appeared over the Kohat pass. When he landed he burst out laughing "Zaidy-I was running more on oil than petrol. An extra oil tank was fitted to give me a consumption of fourteen gallons in three hours. This aircraft requires an engine change immediately". Then we both laughed.

In the month of April, organisations of No. 2 Squadron was a follows.

Squadron Commander
F/LT A.B. Awan.
Adjutant
F/O A.M. Engineer

Flight Commander	Flight Commander	Flight Commander
A. Flight	'B' Flight	'C' Flight
F/O Henry Runganadan	F/O Arjan Singh	F/O Burhanuddin
P/O's Surjit Singh Majithia, Goyal, Allahdad.	P/O's Raza, Ratnagar Das.	P/O's Reporter, Satya Narayan.

Flight Sergeant Williams and Ram Singh remained with me. Flight Sergeant Cooper and Harjinder Singh remained with Mukerjee's No. 1 Squadron. Both Squadrons were side by side in the two big hangers at Peshawar. There was a keen and good competition between both the squadrons in sport and flying. A Wapiti normally carried one pilot and an air gunner in the back. F/O Majumdar came and told me that he had carried two men in the back and made a landining and take off from Razmak aerodrome which was always dreaded by all

pilots. It was a very useful experiment to know. Majum and I had to take the new boys for air experience over the hilly country. So instead of doing two or three trips, I carried P/O's Reporter and Allahdad in the back cockpit and Majum carried P/O's Ratnagar and Anant Narayan. Majum was formating on me. As we reached the peak of Lundukai Ghar, all four of the boys popped out of the rear cockpits and began to exchange some rude signs between each other. We allowed them to carry on with their fun. We did a circuit over Razmak and then set course for Peshawar via Miranshah. I am quite sure that the boys straight from school were quite frightened with their first trip over the rugged mountains of the North West Frontier.

By May the Indian Wing consisting of No. 1 and No. 2 squadrons was well established. Orders were received for No. 1 Squadron to maintain a flight at Miranshah. So F/O Narender took a flight down to that station. Orders were also received simultaneously by me to send a flight to Fort Sandeman as a semi permanent station. So I detailed F/O Runganadan to take A flight of No. 2 squadron I.A.F. to Fort Sandeman. I also sent F/O Surjit Singh Majithia, P/O Arjan Singh and P/O Raza to Sandeman. These fellows had a good time. All the work of the tribal warfare was being carried out by 'A' flight of No. 1 Squadron. 'A' flight of No. 2 Squadron was having a lovely time with stand by duties only. There was plenty of Pulao and roast sheep available at Sandeman. After one of the squadron conferences at Peshawar, F/O Runganadan took a crate of Scotch Whisky and Murree beer in his Wapiti, from Gai's Peshawar. His Wapiti could hardly leave the ground with such a load of drinks. Boozing is always forbidden in the airforce and yet these darned aviators are the biggest boozers on this earth. I have seen some fellows drink in the Indian Air Force and Royal Pakistan Air Force during recent years, but no one could touch Rungie. You had to see him to believe how much he could drink.

One night at fort Sandeman, the boys had laid on a roast sheep and Pulao. Before the feast started in the officerss mess, Runganadan had asked the mess Abdar to lay on plenty of booz on the ice. They started drinking an hour before the feast. Rungie maintained it during

the feed and afterwards. When everyone left the mess at about midnight and were changing to get into bed. Rungie pressed the air raid alarm. The entire flight personnel quickly gathered in front of the hanger. The officers came up at the double. Rungie explained that the enemy had sent a few bombers to destroy Fort Sandeman. Emergency operations gong must be sounded and all pilots must take off to intercept the enemy raiders. Everyone kept a serious face. The Poor Flight Sergeant was dumbfounded as Fort Sandeman lying in the low trough of a valley with the peaks of Soloman's throne, Kajuri kach and Gul Kach towering to height of fourteen thousand feet just in and around the valley was a non night flying station as ordered by air Head Quarter, and H.Q. No. 223 Group Royal Air Force Peshawar. The Flight Sergeant pleaded with the Flight Commander that No raiders were in sight but Rungie insisted that starboard green lights of the enemy raiders could be seen over the Solomon's throne. The airmen laughed but Rungie thundered that he would have a few men put on charge tomorrow morning if the four Wapitis were not wheeled out immediately. The airmen quickly wheeled out four aircraft with bombs and machine guns. Solomon's throne and the other high peaks reared their majestic heads above the Sandeman valley. It was pitch darkness and the stars were very very bright. Arjan, Surjit, and Raza were almost trembling in their pants, when they saw the Flight Commander going on slowly from the lockers, with his flying helmet, goggles and parachute fully strapped on. No one could utter a word. Rungie had blood shot eyes and would not listen to any persuasive arguments. He started up the engine and before any one could say Jack Robin; Rungie was away. His aircraft and the tail light was well up in the air in a fairly steep climb. Rungie wandered over the slopes of 14000 feet high Soloman's throne and over Kajuri Kach for half an hour. He disappeared completely over the high ranges. Why those mountains did not kill him is still not known but he had a charmed, life.

I have seen Rungie fly into a drogue target, cable and weight etc. but he had a charmed life. He tore the drogue over the sea. He cut the cable with his wings and he hit his propellor with a steel weight but still

there wasn't a scratch on his aircraft. I examined it carefully myself during the A.T.C. camp at Drigh Road Karachi during December 1938-January 1939.

When the airmen were getting panicky, Rungie appeared over the horizon under the black shadows of of towering Soloman's throne. He made a short circuit and came low over the hangers which he did not see. He missed the hangers by not more than a foot. Everyone gasped. Rungie glided in, to make a perfect landing in the pitch darkness without any lights of any kind except a dozen kerosene flares.

I always thought Rungie had a charmed life. When I came to know of this episode I called him up at Peshawar during a squadron operational conference and gave him a terrific rocket. Poor Rungie had so many rockets in his life that he had completely forgotten the difference between a raspberry and a rocket.

A very good officer was Henry Runganadan! A thorough gentleman and a good aviator! His only weakness was wine. He had a soft corner for good looking women. A fine fellow was young Rungie one of my Startwart flying officers and the senior Flight Commander in my Squadron; No. 2 I.A.F.

Rungie was killed in an air crash about January 1942. "To him we belong and to him we shall return." God bless his soul!

Rungie was made a Squadron Commander in a most heroic effort that an Indian pilot had putup at Air Head Quarters in the days of British rule. Rungie called at Air Head quarters New Delhi during November 1941 and threatened Group Captain Bussell and Group Captain Perry Keane that he would not leave Air H.Q. till he was given command of an Indian Squadron. At this time there were four Indian squadrons in the field-Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4. Number 1 Squadron I.A.F. had just returned back from Burma under the command of Squadron Leader Kurun Krishan Majumdar, with Lysander air craft and had put up a magnificent show in the evacuation of Burma. Squadron Leader Majumdar had been awarded a D.F.C. and several other Indian pilots were mentioned in despatches by Lord Wavel, C-In-C, India.

Runganadan sat in Air H.Q. for three days and refused to move out. This amused Group Captain Bussell

and Perry Keane who thought Runganadan to be either a super man, a prophet, a magician or a mad man. They both ruled out the possibility of his being mad or having developed a touch of the sun. So under any of the remaining categories of a super man, a prophet or a magician they gave him command of No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. which had already won fame in Burma with Lysander aircraft and under the command of Squadron Leader Majumdar.

Rungie was exceedingly happy. He trotted off to Risalpur where a fighter conversion school had been opened up. Boys of No. 1 Squadron were undergoing conversion training on Hurricane aircraft. On the completion of their training the squadron went down to Drigh Road Karachi to collect fifteen Hawker Hurricane aircraft and proceed to an operational base in Arakan. Those days due to errors of long distance cross country flying across the deserts of Sind and Rajputana and due to tremendous loss of valuable fighter aircraft and due to crashes caused by lack of radio navigational facilities in the sub-continent, it was decided by Air H.Q. that a twin engined transport Lockheed Hudson aircraft with the most experienced set of British crews would lead each fighter squadron from Drigh Road upto Delhi from where the onward route to Arakan via Cawnpore, Allahabad, Ranchi, Dum Dum, and Chittagong was well equipped with radio aids to navigation.

On the day of the accident, Squadron Leader Runganadan was flying in the Lockheed Hudson twin engined transport aircraft with very very selected British crews. Fifteen Hawker Hurricane aircraft flown by Indian pilots weres formating and following the big twin engined transport aircraft. F/O Ratnagar in trying to show off to his squadron Commander, came too near the twin engined aircraft. The slip stream from the twin engines unbalanced Ratnagars aircraft and he dashed against the tail of the Lockheed. Propellor of the Hurricane chopped the tail of the Lockheed Hudson completely off near Hyderabad Sind. Lockheed Hudson nose dived into the ground from a height of six thousand feet and burst into flames. Everyone on board was killed including Henry Runganadan. F/O Ratnagar with completely twisted propellor came back to Drigh Road

and made a very defective landing. Everyone felt like shooting Ratnagar but in such cases no fault could be attributed to anyone. In the history of the air forces more pilots and aircrews have been killed through some silly fool trying to show off.

No. 1 and No. 2 Squadrons progressed well at Peshawar. No. 1 maintained a permanent flight at Miranshah and No. 2 maintained a permanent flight at Fort Sandeman. Whenever there was difficulty at Miranshah, my flight from Sandeman used to fly up to Miranshah and lend a helping hand. It was most significant that we lived like brothers. There was no difference of class creed or religion. This was a direct outcome of the ideals cherished and preached by me, Amarjit Singh, Sircar and Mukerjee since July 1930 when we left Bombay by S.S. Kaiser-i-Hind for training at the R.A.F. College Cranwell.

In this respect we were better than many of the Indianised British army units like 7th, 16th and 3rd cavalry, 5/8th Punjab, 5/10 Baluch, 6/13th Frontier Force, 1/7th Rajput and a battalion of the Hyderabad regiment.

Living in British messes, junior Indian officers always got browned off with cold mutton and snow potatoes. So if any senior Indian officer got married, his house was a regular eating place for all others who were fond of Kofta curry and rice and curried balls. After april 13th, 1939, since I got married, my wife used to take pleasure in producing many Frontier dishes for officers of the Indian Air Force who occasionally used to bolt from the British mess after smelling cold mutton and snow potatoes or tinned sardines too often. Our cook was always kept busy.

One day after my squadron had lent a helping hand in the bombing of Gorwekht which was ordered by the British resident in Waziristan; I went down to see the bombing from Miranshah. A few days after the bombing, a Pathan political officer who came from my native place D.I.K. asked me to listen to the intelligence story of one of the tribal residents from the area of the high mountains of Gorwekht, who had come up with a special message from the Fakir of Ipi. I walked down to the office of the Political Officer and talked to this

man sent by the Fakir. This man laughed as he told the story:- "Fakir Saheb has sent his salams to the P.A. Miranshah and the Squadron Commander of the Indian Air Force and has sent his congratulations on the excellent bombing done by the Air Force who after seven days of concentrated high explosive bombing of the caves at Gorwekht have managed to kill one of Fakir Saheb's favourite chickens" and he laughed aloud. Actually this story might have been true as the caves went deep into the side of steep mountains and the tribesmen had taken all their cattle and live stock into the area of the deep caves. The British Resident at Razmak knew very well that bombing would not do any damage to the tribesmen and followers of the Fakir in the area of the deep caves of Gorwekht but it was a punishment to keep them imprisoned in the caves. The cattle were also not permitted to come out of the caves and graze along the banks of mountain streams where there was an abundance of growth of wild grass. This punishment was inflicted to only a smal section of the tribes who had been naughty boys and were following the Fakir when he had migrated to the area of Gorwekht mountains.

This story of the Fakir made air bombing a ridiculous affair. There was no doubt that air bombing produced little effect in imposing personal and body injury to the section of the followers of the Fakir and their cattle in the region of high mountains; but the punishment was there. Experience had shown that proscription and air bombing of a certain area excluding mud houses and villages; imposed a tremendous restriction on the movement of tribesmen and the grazing of cattle. More sections of Wazirs and Mahsuds had surrendered and handed in thousand of their fire arms, ammunition and large sums of money to Resident as security against a repetition of misbehaviour. In actual combat a tribesman has never been vanquished. More damage is inflicted by air bombing and front and rear machine gun attacks on the tribesmen when interlocked in combat with our troops, than in proscriptions. But proscription has always borne more fruit.

By the first week of June 1941 Group Captain Bussell's plan for expansion of the Indian Air Force to four squadrons was complete. Perry Keane always tried to pick a hole or two in Bussell's schemes but Air

Air Marshal Sir Philip Playfair liked Bussell such a lot that his schemes always went through. Commander-in-Chief had shown an inclination to bring senior Indian army officers to work at General Head Quarters Simla. This information was passed to Air Head Quarters and Naval Head Quarters Simla, also. Four senior Indian army officers:- Captain Sheo Dutt Singh, Wadalia, and Shiv Verma had already arrived at G.H.Q. Simla to work in the training and Ops. directorates. One of the senior Indian Naval officers was also on his way to Simla from Bombay. A signal was received sending Mukerjee to attend the third war course at Staff College Quetta with the rank of a Squadron Leader. Next signal gave my posting to Air Head Quarters with the rank of a Squadron Leader in order to take up training and Ops side of the rapidly expanding Indian Air Force. This was good news but at least I did not appreciate it. After having formed and led Nos. 1 and 2 squadrons, of the Indian Air Force from the days when Ghisa swept the hanger at Drigh Road and with one old Wapiti aircraft K1290; it was a disgrace to leave the flying side and lead in battle and sit in Air H.Q. or staff college with lots of paper work where one has to scratch ones head over and over again in front of the fire. I put in an application to see Group Captain MacKenna, the Station Commander and the British Commander of No. 223 Group R.A.F. Peshawar. But they could not interfere with the decisions of Air Head Ouarters. So with a heavy heart I handed over the Command of No. 2 Squadron I.A.F. to Flight Lieutenant Aspee Engineer, who was my Adjutant. It almost brought tears to my eyes to say good bye to all officers and men of my squadron No. 2 I.A.F. We had flown together in many operations. What a faithful and good bunch of officers and men I had! Now when I look at some of the old photographs, I find many a brave pilot and air gunner gone but their memory will always remain fresh in my heart.

Mukerjee also felt sad the day he handed over Command of No. 1 Squadron to F/LT Majumdar on about the 15th June 1941. He took the train for staff College Quetta and I left for Air H.Q. Simla. Aspee and Majumdar were promoted to the ranks of Squadron Leader two months after Mukerjee and I disappeared in a train

over the Attock bridge. However, both of us were confirmed as substantive Squadron Leaders w.e.f. 15th June 1941. Aspee and Majumdar became acting Squadron Leaders. F/O Verdi, Surjit Singh Majithia and Prithipal Singh came to see me off at the Peshawar Cantonment Station. I had sent F/O Arjan Singh to the Gas School at Beglaum. This was in accordance with a signal from Air H.Q. Many people thought that Arjan was not a very bright type of a chap from an academic point of view. I wanted to prove to them that he was exceedingly intelligent. I gave Arjan half an hour's lecture and impressed upon him that if he did not get good marks at Belgaum in the gas Course I would chop his head off. Arjan laughed and said that he would have appreciated a practical aerobatics course rather than swoting up lectures on gas warfare, Later I was amazed to find that Arjan had actually locked himself up in a room at Belgaum and remembered all the gas lectures by heart to an extent that he came up on top of the course with nearly a hundred British and Indian army officers under instruction.

When I reached Air Head Quarters, Group Captain Bussell was exceedingly kind to me. He showed the draft orders promoting Mukerjce and I both as substantive Squadron Leaders with effect from 15th June 1941. I expressed my regret in having been asked to leave flying and come to Air H.Q. on a ground job. Group Captain was very sympathetic He said "Look my boy. someone has to work at the nerve centre, to plan operations, training and organisation of the Air Force? Any man can lead a squadron. Senior-most officers cannot be spared to do ordinary jobs of dropping bombs when key planning has to be done at the nerve centre. Senior officers like you have done enough flying and have to be taken off flying and put on to planning of Air Force". Same evening Group Captain and Mrs. Bussell asked us to tea at their bungalow. Within two days my wife and I got an invitation from Air Marshal and Lady Playfair for tea at their house. What a palatial bungalow the Air Marshal had at Simla! Air Marshal showed us the present he got on his birthday from the Naval C-in-C, Fitz Herbert. It was a small toy pilot in helmet and goggles and parachute etc. that carried out a variation

of loops and rolls after winding up and leaving on the carpet. Lady Playfair and we all laughed. Lady Playfair liked my wife and used to ask her to many of the knitting parties for war relief work. Later on at the Imperial Delhi gymkhana both Lady Playfair and my wife Taj took part in a fashion parade for the sale of ladies dresses. Taj wore a Marwari woman's dress and a pretty sari presented by the Rani of Jodhpur. The sari was sold to the Maharaja of Jaipur at a fantastic price. What a wonderful woman Lady Playfair was! Even in her middle age she looked so pretty. She had a nickname 'Pip' for her husband Air Marshal Sir Philip Playfair.

My work was exceedingly interesting at the Air Head Quarters. Bussell kept me busy with the operations of the Indian Air Force and expansion of training schools. Following training establishments were organised.

(1) Pre-Cadet training school at Lahore (Walton)
(2) Initial flying training at Karachi, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and Patna flying clubs.
(3) Elementary Flying training schools (E.F.T.S.) at Jodhpur and Secunderabad.
(4) Service flying training School (S.F.T.S.) at Ambala.
(5) School of technical training for airmen (S. of T.T.) at Ambala.
(6) School of technical conversion for N.C.O's, at Ambala.

When serving at Air Headquarters Simla, I was exceedingly lucky to get a flat on Jacko Hill in the near vicinity of Air Head Quarters. It took me only ten minutes to walk down from my home to Air Headquarters. I had a spare room in my house where visiting officers of the I.A.F. could stay for a day or two. Mehar sent a telegram from Calcutta. He spent a few days at Simla and stayed with us. A very smart Sikh Officer who was still under training at Ambala came to look us up. His wife was a very pretty girl and she used to put on slacks in Simla and Ambala also. We asked them to lunch at our house. In the course of the conversation at the lunch table I mentioned to Mr. Singh that monkeys were a great nuisance and took away many of our eatables. They snatched a slice of bread and jam from the hands of our

infant son Anwar. I specially remarked about a certain notorious character, the cut face monkey of Jacko who was a real swine around our house. It was a pity that we were not permitted to shoot monkeys. Mr. Singh had different views about monkeys. He belonged to a state from the Simla hills. "Study the psychology of a monkey. Never show fright and the monkey will never come near you" said Mr. Singh. Lo and behold! Mr. Singh had hardly finished his sentence when an animal jumped from a nearby tree, through the window; and Mr. Cut Face was on our table with a big bang. He showed his teeth to Mr. Singh. My wife pushed hereself into the chair, away from the table. In a flash Mr. Singh was under the table. Cut Face picked up an apple and a banana, and leapt out of the window before you could say, 'Jack Robin'. Mr. Singh came out from underneath the table after two minutes. His face was very pale and he was speechless.

We remembered this joke for years. In fact my Pathan bearer from Swabi related this story to a few of my friends at the dining table when I was at the Staff College Quetta in February 1942. Everyone laughed.

In the month of July, Group Captain Bussell asked me to check up S.F.T.S. and School of T.T. at Ambala. Here I saw Wing Commander Simpson and Ginger Middleton, C.F.I. and the senior instructor at the Service Flying Training school. I managed to get a trip in an Audax for 30 minutes. It was such good fun to fly after sitting in a chair at A.H.Q. Simla for nearly a month and a half. I paid a visit to the school of T.T. also. Here also the name of the Chief Instructor and C.O. was Simpson. In my spare time I looked up Major Rudra of the Punjab Regiment. His battalion had gone overseas, and he was attached to a training battalion of the 15th Punjab Regiment. It was so nice to see our friends Mr. and Mrs. Jacobs and Dr. and Mrs. Mukerjee in the city.

Group Captain Bussel and I worked hard to get four squadrons of the Indian Air Force ready for operations. A large consignment of Lysander aircraft had been received. in Bombay, large war contributions had been raised by the public. It was decided by Lord Brabourne Governor of Bombay that these funds will go to the procurement of new aircraft for the Indian Air Force.

Maharaja of Patiala had already subscribed Rs. 2,00,000 for the procurement of a Blenheim. Maharaja of Kashmir had very kindly agreed to loan his Super Lockheed Electra twin engined fast transport aircraft for fast travel work. Maharajas of Jaipur and Jodhpur had given large funds for the procurement of aircraft. Nizam of Hyderabad since the beginning of the war had subscribed towards the maintenance and upkeep of two Hurricane fighter squadrons in England. These were called the Hyderabad Squadrons. Practically all the ruling princes in India subscribed generaously towards the procurement of aircraft for the Indian Air Force. Kathiawar states were also very noble towards the I.A.F.

About August 1941 when I was at A.H.Q. Simla, came the sad news that F/O Bhunj Deo prince of Muir Bhunj state was killed in a Lockheed Hudson aircraft. Calcutta Coast defence flight had moved upto Cuttack. In a heavy rainstorm and fog, Bhunj Deo came in to land in bad visibility. The aircraft hit a mound or hillock and burst into flames. All the British and Indian crews were killed. In another few days Prince of Sangli was killed down south in a four engined Dragon Rapide aircraft when he swung into a dug-up drain by the side of the runway. His bombs went off and everyone was blown up.

Few weeks later prince of Sikkim was killed in a Lysander aircraft at Peshawar when he made a bad landing and crashed. The aircraft caught fire. P/O Cheema was thrown clear with head injuries. A fire engine rushed to the spot. As misfortune would have it, the foam nozzle of the fire engine would not work. The whole station including the Wing Commander and the Group Captain stood there watching the aircraft burn to ashes. No one could get near the leaping flames. Fire crews held the nozzle, repeating the drill by numbers, three times, but nothing came out of the nozzle. Prince of Sikkim's screams died down to a gentle groan and then a complete silence as nothing but ashes remained.

This accident very nearly broke the heart of Group Captain Bussell. Prince of Skkim was the only son of his father, Bussell had brought him from the Sikkim state in order to train him as a pilot officer in the I.A.F.

Sixteen Lysander aircraft were handed over to No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. under the command of Squadron Leader K.K. Majumdar. This ceremony was carried out with great pomp and glory. Governor of Bombay Lord Brabourne had flown upto Peshawar, and handed over Lysanders personally to No. 1 Squadron as Sir George Cunningham, Governor of N.W.F.P. looked on. Aspee's No. 2 Squadron got all the Audaxes discarded by No. 1 Squadron.

No. 1 Squadron were preparing for move to Burma against the Japanese. No. 2 were still entangled with the tribesmen in Waziristan. Aspee was getting short of officers in No. 2 squadron. Mehar Singh was asked to rejoin No. 2 Squadron at Miranshah. Within a fortnight of his arrival at Miranshah, F/O Mehar Singh, nick-named Mehar Baba after the bearded religious saint in Sind who had once upon a time enticed all the young and good looking girls out of their homes, was shot down by the tribesmen. The news flashed across the length and breadth of Waziristan. Many a platoon commander rushed out of a piquet with a view to retrieving the shot down birdman. Late in the evening searching Indian pilots located a crashed aircraft on the side of a high hill in the upper Tochi valley. Mehar had been bombing a village which had been proscribed and deserted by the tribesmen who hid on the steep slopes of the hils and took aim as the aircraft pulled out of a dive and zoomed upwards towards the slopes. One hawk eyed Wazir hit the aircraft right through the petrol tank and pipe lines. Mehar went down to the side of the hill but had glided a distance of four miles away from the tribesmen.

When the tribesmen saw the birdman going down, up the valley of Tochi; they ran after him. hell for leather. When Mehar crashed in the hill side, he was hardly wounded. His air gunner Corporal Ghulam Ali was knocked out. Mehar knew that if the tribesmen caught him; being a Sikh, he would be skinned alive. Tribesmen disliked Sikhs immensely due to the atrocities carried out in the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Hari Singh Nalwa.

Mehar picked up Ghulam Ali and a Lewis gun and dragged both upto a distance of about half a mile

up the steep slopes till Ghulam Ali woke up from his concussion of the head. They both ran up the steep slopes as they saw thick pine wood forests in that direction. The sun was almost setting. Both Mehar and Ghulam Ali were going at tha double carrying the Lewis gun in turns on their shoulder. It was lucky that extensive training of the I.A.F. taught a regular game of Football and Hockey. It was proving useful in covering the distance in quicker time than the tribesmen.

The sun had set. Mehar and Ghulam Ali were dead tired with running after receiving multiple wounds and concussion. But the thought of being skinned alive was very unpleasant and it kept them on the trot.

Tribesmen in large numbers were running in pursuit. Mehar and Ghulam Ali hid in a cave. Several times human footsteps were heard outside the mouth of the cave. Luckily no one came inside. When night fell, Mehar and Ghulam Ali were attacked by a pack of wolves that used to live in that cave. By some miracle thay managed to keep the wolves at bay.

When dawn came, they continued their trek up the slope till they came to the summit. It was lucky that they remembered their bearing towards the reverse slopes of Razzani camp. Early in the morning an army patrol found them dead tired, wounded and hungry, trekking down towards Razzani camp. Such were the brave exploits of Mehar Singh, a man who had the courage of a Bengal Tiger and the flying ability of a Himalayan eagle.

Mehar Singh was the bravest pilot I have seen or heard of. I have travelled all over the world. I have known all the bravest of the Australian, Canadian, British and American pilots or at least read about their exploits and their career in the air force. It is my honest belief that Mehar Singh was the bravest and a most capable military pilot the world has known between the years 1935 and 1952. Mehar obtained his wings at the R.A.F. cadet college Cranwell in 1935. His instructor openly declared "Mehar Singh would easily win the Grove's Memorial Flying prize if overseas cadets were not debarred from competing".

In the year 1944 in the month of March, Mehar won the D.S.O. in Arakan operations against the

Japanese when Commanding No. 6 fighter reconnaissance squadron of the Indian Air Force. At this time there were many British Australian, Canadian and New Zealander Squadron Commanders operating in Arakan (East Bengal). Squadron Leader Gibbs Commanding No. 82 Squadron R.A.F. was doing his best to get a D.S.O. He already held a D.F.C. In fact all his flight commanders held a D.F.C. and a few other pilots also. Mehar walked away with the D.S.O. which was awarded by Air Marshal Baldwin of the thousand bomber air raid fame of Cologne. I shall describe Mehar's exploits briefly and later at certain relevent places.

In september Bussel went away on an inspection of E.F.TS's at Secunderabad and Jodhpur. He visited some of the Kathiawar states also with a view to stationing a squadron of the Indian Air Force at Bhuj aerodrome and opening up a training estalishment in Nawanagar. Group Captain Perry Keane was always against Bussell's ideas of expanding the Indian Air Force to a formidable organisation. Perry Keane sent for me and asked me to explain expansion of the I.A.F. When I told him that three army cooperation squadrons were ready, out of which No. 1 was marking time for proceeding to Arakan, and we had Nos. 4, 5 and 6 on paper, and also hoped to have these ready by the beginning of February 1942; Perry Keane pulled a long face. "You may go" he said. When Bussell came back, I informed him of my conversation with Perry Keane. Bussell laughed. "Yes-Perry Keane has his own ideas on organisation but I have the full support of A.O.C. as far as expansion of I.A.F. goes".

I had a firm belief that if I.A.F. was expanded with full support; it would provide a tremendous aid to the allies in winning the battle against the Japanese in Burma. The army had a full expansion programme but full attention was not being given to I.A.F. Whatever was being done was by the solitary help and goodwill of Group Captain Bussell, whose name should be written in gold letters in the history of Indian Air Force and R.P.A.F. I had the privilege of working with him as the only Indian Staff Officer during the British rule. I shall repeat throughout the pages of this book that Group Captain Bussell did just as much in fact more than what

was done by F/LT Bouchier, Philip Haynes and Wing Commander Horsley.

At one time Mukerjee was of the opinion that Bussell had done a little harm to the I.A.F. on one or two occasions. But Mukerjee had not known the inside story of the expansion of I.A.F. as he never had a chance of working in Air Head Quarters till at a later stage in June 1943 when Bussell had gone and Air Commodore Proud took over as Inspector General of Indian Air Force. I.A.F. always had very capable men at the helm of things. Some of the best R.A.F. pilots like Flight Lieutenant Bouchier, Philip Haynes, and Horseley commanded flights, squadrons and wings of I.A.F. Group Captain Bussell was a test pilot at the R.A.F. experimental station Farnborough before he came to Air H.Q. Simla as Wing Commander Operations and training. He was responsible for putting the twin engined aircraft Oxford and Consul through their paces at Farnborough during 1936-37.

Squadrons were sprinkled all over the countryside in independent roles. The battle in Burma and Arakan is another glorious chapter in the History of the Indian Air Force. Against the Japanese land and air Force, our boys put up a magnificant battle. Between November 1941 when No. 1 Squadron with Lysanders moved into the battle zone at Rangoon under the command of K.K. Majumdar upto the year 1945 when the battle was won, we lost approximately one hundred pilots killed in pction. Mehar Singh's famous No. 6 fighter recce squadron suffered the death of twenty pilots, one after another. It was later nick-named the famous Suicide Squadron I.A.F.

In August-September 1941, a para brigade was formed. Major Hopkins, Abbot, and Captain Misri Chand of the Punjab regiment were attached to the training section of Air Head Quarters and came under Bussell. The more the merrier! We arranged the manufacture of parachutes at the Hindustan Aircraft Factory Bangalore. First dummy was dropped with a parachute from the Air at Drigh Road Karachi. Our Indian parachute and the dummy came down like a sack of bricks. Major Hopkins and Abbot scratched their heads as they stood on the ground watching the dummy fall through the air. They

laughed. "Thank God, it was'nt me-Hoppy" said Abbot, as the dummy of a man crashed on the ground in smithereen's. Later experiments proved more successful and Hoppy decided to jump. F/LT Brown from the T and D flight Drigh Road dropped Hoppy right on top of the cement concrete tarmac. Hoppy slipped in his parade boots and broke his spine. Luckily the damage was not too much. Hoppy returned to Air H.Q. Simla after a month, covered in Plaster of Paris.

Parachute school was formed at Rawalpindi (Chaklala) Aerodrome. A squadron of Wellington bombers was used for para jumping. Indian army trained up a full brigade within two months. A Gurkha soldier jumped at Chaklala. His parachute did not open. He fell on the ground from a height of two hundred feet and a forward velocity of 120 M.P.H. Every bone in his body was broken but the man lived and survived. This shows what a Gurkha soldier is made of.

Captain Misri Chand was a great friend at A.H.Q. Simla. I hardly met other Indian officers at G.H.Q. At this time, Major Sheo Dutt Singh, Wadalia, and Shiv Verma were at G.H.Q. Simla. Also an Indian Naval Officer was posted to N.H.Q. Simla. It always amused me to see a naval officer in uniform trotting a horse at Simla in the hills. I always felt like asking him "Where is your cruiser, sailor!"

I carried out one more inspection of the. School of T.T. and found all the old timers like Ram Singh Harjinder Singh, Abdul Salaam, and Mahboob, Sharma, Mitra, Nair, Harchand Singh and Pritam Singh undergoing conversion training for fitter II's and Fitter I's. I inspected S.F.T.S. also and saw the old gang including P/O's Salahuddin, Tutu Amber and others just completing their last term before passing out for posting to an Indian squadron. I also attended a recruitment board at Delhi before returning back to Simla.

I found Simla very cool and pleasant. September and October are the best months at any of the hill stations, Simla, Mussorie, Murree, Dalhousie, Naini Tal, and Darjeeling. A most interesting lecture was given at the theatre by a senior British Colonel who had returned back from the Western Desert in North Africa.

He also gave a short description of the expedition and occupation of Iceland by British forces during early days of the war. Lord Wavel C-in-C India and Supreme Commander of South East Asia was also present. The lecture was exceedingly interesting and there were some humorous moments also when the theatre resounded with laughter. Throughout the British Commonwealth, humour is exercised and maintained during battle also, if an occasion arises for such a thing. On this occasion the subject of loud laughter was the peaceful cooperation and compromise of Icelander females with British troops, inspite of language difficulties.

My wife and I enioyed long walks round Jacko hill and Sanjauli. One of local news papers spread the rumour that a tiger had eaten up a goat in the near vicinity of Sanjauli. We therefore exercised caution during our long walk and returned home before dark. An air raid exercise was also held one night. Two instructors from the S.F.T.S. at Ambala flew over the city of Simla in the moonlight. All lights were dimmed and sirens went into action with first aid, ambulance, and Civil Defenee Squads running about all over the place.

By the end of October advanced parties of Air H.Q. G.H.Q., N.H.Q. and the Civil secretariat began to move down to Delhi By the first week of November, more than half of Simla was empty. I had left my car, a Pontiac 1938 saloon in a local garage. I sent most of our kit away by train and then moved down to Delhi along with my wife, two children, a bearer and an Ayah, by car. At Delhi there was a tremendous scarcity of accommodation. All the big chiefs got lovely bungalows on Akbar Road and Sher Shah Suri road. All officers of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and below were accommodated in tented accommodation on Humayun Road. I also was allocated tented accommodation on Humayun Road. I also was allocated three G.P. tents and a kitchen. These tents were terribly cold during winter. M.E.S. had shown their ingenuity. Lo and behold! Two pucca rooms were constructed with steel doors and glass windows to be used as a kitchen and a coal store. Sleeping room and sitting room were under canvas in the biting cold of Delhi.

First few days in November were hot and all officers wore shorts and shirts. December was bitterly

cold and we began to light fires in the hutments of South Block of the Imperial Secretariat where Air H.Q. was located. Captain Misri Chand was the first Indian officer to have become a member of the Imperial gymkhana Simla and Delhi. I asked Group Captain Bussel to help me in becoming a member. Those days, only British officers were members of the Imperial gymkhana and a few of the Indian princes. Group Captain Bussell helped me and very soon my wife and I commenced to play Tennis on the gymkhana lawns.

During the previous months No. 1 Squadron with Lysander aircraft moved from Peshawar to Rangoon during the fall of Singapore. I watched the Lysander formation in three flights of four aircraft each plus the Squadron Commander pass over Air Head Quarters New Delhi in a Vic formation. The formation was led by Sbuadron Leader Kurun Krishan Majumdar. Naranjan Prasad, Prithipal Singh and a third flight lieutenent were the flight commanders. It was an exceedingly good formation. Many of the officers including Squadron Leader Giles in charge operations and training of R.A.F. squadrons remarked that the formation was excellent. The boys Landed at Welligdon Aerodrome. In the evening P/O Raza dropped in at my tents on Humayun Road and had a cup of tea with us. Next morning the squadron left for Rangoon.

After No. 1 had left for Rangoon, No. 2 Squadron under Squadron Leader Aspee Engineer was moved upto Madras and numbers three and four were formed at Kohat. Command of No. 3 Squadron with Audaxes was given to Atam Nanda and Command of No. 4 Squadron with Lysanders was given to Mohammed Khan Janjua. A wing was formed at Kohat to look after the tribal warfare, and train junior officers for advanced work against the enemy in Burma and Arakan.

I had suggested to Group Captain Bussell that a batch of I.A.F. boys should be sent to U.K. for experience in more modern type of flying in combat against German bomber formations. Bussell listened to my suggestion and we sent a batch consisting of Man Mohan Singh, Khosla, Latif, Sanghi, Shahi, Bhore, Shiv Dev Singh Ranjan Dutt, etc. It was a batch of twenty boys They put up an exceedingly good show and fought many a

brave battle. P/O Khosla was shot down over the English channel, in a Hurricane fighter. He attacked a German formation successfully but was killed. Man Mohan Singh was shot down and killed in a flying boat near Singapore. His flying boat was attacked by a Jap Zero and shot down. Man Mohan Singh after crash landing, attempted to swim ashore when the zero swooped down and riddled him with bullets. He sank in the water within a short distance of the shore. Sanghi, Shahi, Shiv Dev and others carried outm any night sorties and raids over Germany in R.A.F. Lancaster and Wellington night bombers. They flew as co-pilots with R.A.F. British crews. At this time one or two Indian sergeant pilots like Reddy were also operating with the R.A.F. on night bombing raids over Germany. Reddy was studying in England when the war broke out. Like many of our brave students who had a love for the country which was educating them; he joined up for active war duties. Many others joined the army etc. Ranjan Dutt went to a fighter squadron and did very well. Long time ago, when I was in Arakan, Wing Commander Chater who was undergoing training in the same squadron as Ranjan Dutt, told me the story. "At our aerodrome Ranjan Dutt picked up a Lysander aircraft and asked me to come along. On that day after the fall of Norway, there was some enemy shipping activity in the North Sea. Dutt commenced to straff a small enemy sloop. North sea was infested with Messerschmidt fighter aircraft. We left the sloop as two Messerschmidts appeared on the scene. I was literally petrified as Lysander was hardly a match for a Messerschmidt. But Dutt showed no fear at all".

Out of this batch of twenty boys, we lost ten. The remaining ten returned back to India. One or two are still alive and doing well with the I.A.F. as I am writing these few lines in the year 1955.

In January 1942, Germany's Africa Corps was doing exceedingly well. Although the fourth Indian Division had already defeated the Italians in the battle of Keren and Amba Alagi; story of the German Africa Corps was different. Germans were pushing ahead at Mesra Matruh, Tobruk and along the desert road. If the Germans had captured Egypt, the road to Iran and India would be open. Reinforcements had to be rushed

to middle East and Iraq. Transport aircraft in the Indian Command were asked to carry ammunition to Habbainyya.

Hem Chowdhry, Habeeb, and Mehar Singh were some of the only Indian pilots who had qualified on Blenheims and Dakotas. Mehar was detailed to come up from Coast Defence duties at Calcutta and fly a twin engined DC3 Dakota to Habbaniyya. They loaded up the Dakota so much with the small arms ammunition that the aircraft did not leave the ground and crashed into a hillock at the end of the aerodrome at Drigh Road. The aircraft caught fire. Ammunition began to burst. It sounded like the rattle of a dozen machine guns. Mehar stood there unperturbed when the fire engine could not get within half a mile of the crash. Group Captain Rutter said "Mehar Singh is either a hero or a mad man".

A hunt ball was held at the imperial Gymkhana, New Delhi in January 1942, Over five hundred British officers and wives came to the dinner and dance. The three chiefs of the defence services and the Viceroy came to the ball. A few Indian princes and princesses were also present. That pomp and glory of the British days had to be seen in order to believe. Major Misri Chand, my wife and I also came to this ball. Ladies wore picturesque evening gowns and colourful gold saries. All men were in uniform or tail coats and ceremonial evening dress. The big hall was decorated beautifully without imparting a cheap touch with too many balloons etc. I shall remember the hunt ball as long as I live. The imperial rule had a wonder touch of grandeur although the status of an ordinary Indian was that of a slave. King's Commissioned Indian officers in King's uniform and their wives were definitely respected by the British. Throughout my service career in the Indian Air Force from July 1930 upto September 1945, I never had a moment to suspect that I or my wife did not command respect in a Government office, the flying field, theatre of operations, or at the British officer's clubs and Imperial Gymkhana during social functions.

Englishman was very strict in how he ruled the natives, but he was a good sport, and possessed tremendous amount of sense of justice. English women were particularly nice to King's commissioned Indian

officers and I.C.S. officers. In my young days as a P/O and an F/O I was asked to dinner dance and cinema shows etc. by many wives and daughters of senior British officers of the Royal Air Force at Drigh Road, Old Sarum, Cranwell and Peshawar. After marriage, Taj and I mixed very freely with R.A.F. officers and their wives. There was hardly any distinction. One day in April 1940, Mrs. Milne the station Commanders wife stopped her car on the road and picked up our infant baby boy Anwar who was being pushed in a pram by the Ayah. Mrs. Milne picked Anwar up and kissed him and hugged him as if it were her own infant son. This story was told to me and my wife by the ayah.

By the month of January 1942 Group Captain Bussell was posted to Karachi to command a big war material depot preparatory to posting to U.K. I was exceedingly sorry to say Good Bye to a most capable officer who had done so much for the Indian Air Force and its expansion when every one else was against the idea. Bussell was replaced by Group Captain Walker who had come from the R.A.F. Training Command in Canada. Giles and I had nick-named him Walkie Walker or Johnny Walker. The poor man was without a wife. Then in the middle of the cold weather they gave him a tent in the hotel Imperial New Delhi.

Squadron Leader Giles and I used to be directly under Group Captain Walker. Giles was responsible for the operations and training of R.A.F. Squadrons in India and I looked after the Indian Air Force. Group Captain Walker was completely lost to find himself in a country like India after being in Canada for two years during the war. The shop keepers, our language and the people were so strange to Walker. Half the time Walker was lost in the names; Jodhpur, Secunderabad, Ambala, Lahore etc. and then Bussel had invented his own methods of training graphs and syllabi for the Indian boys who lived in different environments to those in Canada U.K. or Australia. Walker intended to introduce Air Marshal Sir Guy Garrard's training scheme for the I.A.F. Bussell's scheme was more suited to Indian conditions.

On cold wintery evenings, Walker sat there, peering through Sir Guy Garrard's training documents

sent by Air Ministry London. The sun had set but Walker would still be there in Air H.Q. Giles and I used to get browned off because we could not leave till Group Captain had left the office. Day after day the same happened. Gile's wife and my wife waited in the tented accommodation at Humayoun road for the husbands to return home for a cup of hot tea. So one day Giles said "To hell, with this-I am going home for tea as we have some guests. War is war but when we finish the day's work by 4.30 P.M., there is no point in slaving at Air H.Q." He picked up his cycle and went. I followed suite.

Next day we discovered why Walker used to sit in his room till 7 in the evening. His tent in the hotel Imperial New Delhi was very cold. So he used to prefer his electric heater and a warm room with carpets etc. in Air H.Q.

One day Walker called Ram Lal Kakar the Establishment Officer in his room and set him a hard task of locating his heavy trunks and kit sent from Toronto Canada Via Van-Couver and the Pacific. Ram Lal Kakar was a very methodical type of a fellow. So he asked a series of questions relating to the travel agencies and shipping companies in Canada with whom Walker had booked his entire luggage. Several important names were given and Ram Lal Kakar begam to take down written notes in order to send a cablegram to the various booking agencies and shipping companies in Van-Couver. Group Captain Walker looked pleased. After all he had found a man in Air H.Q. who was going to do the Indian rope trick and locate his luggage in transit between Van-Couver and Delhi. Ram Lal Kakar asked "When did you book it on a ship at Van-Couver". "About a month ago and the ship sailed" was the reply. Ram Lal Kakar laughed aloud. "I have located your luggage" said Mr. Kakar. "Japan is in the war and your luggage is at the bottom of the Pacific ocean off Singapore. There is no point in sending a cable to Vancouver". Walker pulled such a long face.

By the end of January 1942, Mukerjee had completed his war course at the Staff College Quetta. Air H.Q. wanted the next senior Indian Officer to join the 4th War Course at the staff college, Quetta. On about 28th January I was invited to a cock tail party

thrown by Lady Playfair. A roaring fire was burning in the drawing room of Air Marshal's palatial house on Akbar road. Group Captain Walker threw a hint to my wife that we were going to Staff College Quetta. Next morning I went to see Wing Commander King who was the Chief of the Personnel Section. He informed me that it was a great favour to Indian Officers to be selected for the Staff College Course. Days of flying were almost over except for an occasional trip here and there. Senior Officers of the I.A.F. were being prepared for Staff duties at Group Head Quarters and Air Head Quarters.

My relief had already arrived. It was a British Officer. Mukerjee on Passing out of Staff College Quetta was posted to H.Q. No. 223 Group R.A.F. Peshawar as Squadron Leader-in-Charge Operations and training of the Indian Air Force. Our No. 4 war course for senior officers was to commence on 16th February.

On about 2nd February I said good bye to all the British Officers and Indian Supervising Officers of all sections. Mr. Jawala Singh officer Supervisor training and Operations Branch was very sorry to miss me at A.H.Q. Ram Lal Kakar and Mr. Fazal Din wished me the best of luck at Staff College. I collected spare petrol coupons from all friends I knaw at Delhi. Petrol was so much restricted that all officers of the defence services in India; British and Indian alike could hardly keep their cars going. War was on. It was also imposssible to get a railway wagon for despatching my car to Quetta. After all, I was proceeding on duty. At this time every American officer in Delhi from a 2nd Lieut, to a Colonel had a jeep to himself. Petrol could be obtained from any American army petrol pump in town No logs were maintained. All the American 2nd Lieuts. and Sergeants spent their Sundays at Okla and at Agra in the moonlight and the lovely embrace of beautiful local Popsies from Delhi. British and Indian officers could not drive their own cars, at their own expense, on Government duty, for the simple reason that petrol was not available. I gathered togother my four months quota of five gallons a month plus a little more on the petrol ration coupons taken from a dear friend Mr. Zaman Khan Cantonment Executive Officer. I put my wife and two children and a faithful Pathan servant Tahir in my Pontiac Saloon

1938 and set course for my home town Dera Ismail Khan across the river Indus in the North West Frontier Province. The cook and the Hindu Ayah shed some tears as we moved out of Humayun Road towards the Purana Qila road and thence on the main road to Lahore. Our life is a continuous series of meetings and partings!

I was exceedingly lucky to have obtained enough petrol on ration coupons in order to get across the Indus to my home town. I intended to leave the car in my home and then preceed to Quetta by train. There was hardly any point in running a motor car when you have to keep on begging for petrol coupons all the time.

We reached Lahore in good time and stopped at the Braganza hotel for the night. Next morning we left early as the journey upto the Indus was fairly long with a hundred miles stretch of desert lying between Jhang Manghiana and Bhakkar. Jack Giles before I said good-bye to him, warned me about this stretch of desert. He was a transport pilot in the A.O.C's transport flight at Delhi before he took over duties of Squadron Leader operations and training of R.A.F. at A.H.Q. Jack was an exceptional pilot and a very fine fellow. He had done many of a flight over this stretch of the Thal desert in a twin engined Oxford and a Consul aircraft. He warned me "If your car breaks down, you had your chips! because there isn't a village within a hundred miles and then you are with a wife and two infants. By Gosh".

In order to give the car and self some rest, I made a halt at Jhang Manghiana in the P.W.D. rest house. The cook and the chowkidar got some good food ready and we spent a very comfortable night at the rest house. Early in the morning I set course again after filling up my car with petrol and oil. A few spare Burmah Shell tin cans full of petrol were put away in the rear trunk in case of emergency.

At a little distance from Jhang Manghiana, we crossed a big canal or part of river. After that we were in the virgin desert. I cannot understand how during those youthful days I had so much confidence in a motor car. There is no doubt that Americans definitely know one thing and that is how to make a motor car. Previously I had a Chevrolet which during bechalor days I drove

all over the wild territory of the tribal belt from Peshawar and Kohat to Bannu and D.I.K. For years I did these trips without a single stoppage. During winter there was plenty of snow on the foot hills and during Summer there was a temperature of 118°F in the shade.

Very soon the pucca road merged into a Kutcha track, and a Kutcha track petered out into the wide expanse of the virgin Thal desert. Even foot prints of a camel Caravan had been wiped out on this sand track by ferocious sand storms and sand drift. The provincial P.W.D. had done some effort in putting up white washed pylons and bricks and stones at some intervals of half miles in order to show the demarcation of the desert track; but wild wind across the Thal desert had burried everything under heaps of sand. For miles there was no white washed stone or pylon. I kept driving by keeping a rough sense of direction. A parched solitary tree appeared over the horizon; a lonely shepherd drove a herd of black goats across the track. The biggest mistake a man can make is to ask an illiterate shepherd about the way to Bhakkar. This was years before the creation of Pakistan and the development of Thal project when good roads had not been built throughout this tract. At one place there was a small sand dune and a white washed pylon indicating the desert track at the bottom of this sand dune. The wheels of the car got stuck. For a moment I thought "We had our chips". Thanks to the makers of Pontiac; we were out of the soft sand in two seconds without even getting down. Throughout that journey my wife showed no signs of fear or concern over the possibility of getting stuck up in the Thal desert.

I thanked God when after covering a distance of one hundred miles I saw the village of Bhakkar appear over the horizon. We pushed on and turned right along the left bank of the river Indus. After driving a distance of twenty miles, we crossed the boat bridge and reached home before evening. Jack was quite right. I would never have attempted to do this trip again. But now things have changed. Thal has been fully developed with a system of canals and roads. This distance of one hundred miles between Jhang Manghiana and D.I.K. is now covered daily by cars and buses, using a first class

metalled road, Constructed by the Provincial Government of the Punjab.

After I left Air H.Q. Jack Giles also put in for a transfer to an operational squadron of the Royal Air Force.. I am not aware whether he is still alive or died during the last world war 1939-1945. Jack was a good officer and a very noble friend. We both used to enjoy the joke when seeing Walkie Walker sitting in front of roaring fire in his room at Air H.Q. He avoided his cold tent in hotel Imperial New Delhi. Poor man did not bave enough warm kit, as a major portion of his luggage was at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean when in transit between Van-Couver and New Delhi. The Japs must have torpedoed the ship.

After a stay of a week at home in D.I.K. I left by train for Quetta and reached the staff college on 14th February. A married quarter was allotted to me in the temporary hutments. There had been a verv heavy fall of snow. Everything was covered in four inches of snow. It was a great privilege to be a student in that wonderful institution with a great history. I joined Colonel Mark's tutorial group. Mukerjee in the previous term was also in Colonel Mark's tutorial group. Very few Indian officers had passed out of Staff College Quetta during previous years. In the previous term Captain Hayauddin, Major Dubey and S/L Mukerjee were the few Indian officers who qualified. Before the war, there was a competitive examination for entry to the Staff College Quetta. During 1933-34 I had seen Captain Azam, and Shrinagesh swotting hard for the competitive examination. Captain Kalwant Singh had topped the list. After qualifying at the Staff College and after a few years of staff experience with various brigades Colonel Kalwant Singh popularly nicknamed Kallu throughout the Indian army, became one of the directing staff at the Staff College. This was a very good show and gave the Indians some prestige. All other instructors were British including Wing Commander Whitehead (Ex. Cranwell). He was an exceptionally nice fellow and helped us a great deal. He was nicknamed Bomber White head by the Directing staff. The other air force officer in the course with me was Squadron Leader Frogley who was from the E.F.T.S. at Secunderabad.

A week later my wife turned up at Quetta. We called on Col. and Mrs. Kalwant Singh, Col. and Mrs. Marks, Colonel Armstrong (2nd in Command) and Brigadier Evans (Commandant). There was a very happy collection of Indian and British officers on the 4th war course. Some of the students from the Indian army were Captain Akbar (Frontier Force), Usman (Baluch) Gurdip Singh, Brij Mohan Kaul, Chacha Afzal (Punjab regiment), Bannerjee (3rd Cav-), Bogey Sen. (Baluch Regt.), Habeebullah (16th Cav.) Ranbir Singh (Patiala Infantary), Partap Narain (Indian Engineers), Tommy Masud; Rajinder Singh etc.

First few days we spent on learning various organisations and composition of army units. Then started an extensive lecture programme on strategy and tactics and working out of Ops. and 'Q' plans in the field. Bundles of precis papers were issued. Sometimes we felt that we were snowed under, with heaps of precis papers which we could not possibly read through and assimilate. Many problems appeared quite difficult to a poor airman for whom the conduct of battle was too slow. In one scheme both Frogley and I scratched our heads for a long time in order to realize that an expeditionary force on the ground would take as much as seven days in moving upto point B from Point A. This was a great teaching for us to know how slow but how thorough and methodical the army were. Preparing staff tables was another headache.

Early in March, the battle of Ahwaz started. We had so many bundles of precis papers and sand models to study that a man's head went round and round. Then on a Saturday afternoon F/O Surjit Singh Majithia flew up in a Lysander aircraft of No. 4 squadron I.A.F. in order to take a mosaic photograph of a wide area of mountains and valleys as ordered by the army.

When Surjit knocked at the door of my house, he found me under a heap of precis papers, operational maps, and my draft answers to the scheme with heaps of staff tables etc. He asked me "What the hell is all this collection of papers and maps about". I replied with a laugh "The battle of Ahwaz is on, and I am in the middle of the blooming battle with armoured cars,

field guns and two divisions to be moved upto the front position". Surjit stood in front of the fire and laughed loudly "Come on" he said. I will give you a little change from the battle of Ahwaz. Your mind must be getting pretty rusty when mixed up with the blooming army. What about a spot of ozone air over the Loe Sar peak. It is covered with snow and is beautiful". This idea was good. He had a staff car with him. We drove down to the old and obsolete landing ground at the end of Quetta Cantonment. A beautiful Lysander aircraft was parked there. Surjit put me in the back cockpit. He started up the engine and took off, I was amazed at the power of a modern type of an aero engine; Bristol Peagasus, developing roughly 650-700 H.P. He made a bee line for the Loe Sar peak. We went very low over it. It was very pleasing and also very frightening to look down into snow covered deep gorges just a few feet below you. He looked back and made a sign "Where else"? I pointed towards the fourteen thousand snow covered peak "Takatu". Surjit headed straight for a U gap above the Takatu and we almost went through this gap. These beautiful peaks of Baluchistan are among the most pretty mountain peaks of the world. The temperature must have been at least 20 degrees below freezing at a height of fourteen thousand feet.

What a happy collection of Indian officers and British officers and their wives was at the staff college! We had a dinner party in turns and went to the British Officers Quetta club for dances on Saturdays. All Indian wives were very modern and attended the dance regularly. I played for the Staff College Hockey and Tennis teams and won all over games against the Signals and Quetta Club etc.

Staff college and a Super modern Indian wife reminded me of a funny story which was told to us by another officer of the State forces posted in Quetta. During the previous staff College Course i.e. July 1941-January 1942. Two pretty wives of Indian officers on the Staff College Course were out on an evening stroll along the main road running in front of the College. They were coming up the road towards the college. Both the girls were dressed up in multicoloured,

flashy silk saries. With high heeled shoes if an Indian pretty girl ties up a sari very tightly around the shapely posterior, the walk and the movement of hips appears most appealing. As these girls were walking up the slightly sloping road towards the main building of the Staff College; a whole company of British troops dressed in P.T. clothes were returning back from Hannah lake after a ten miles cross country run. Amidst this group of about a hundred trotting British troops was a very tired young Tommy Atkins. These troops were approaching the two girls from behind from the Hannah lake side. Tommy Atkins left his party of trotting troops in vests and white shorts and approached the shapely posterior from behind. With quick movement of his two hands on the shapely buttocks of one of the Indian girls, in half a second he played the beat of a drum like that of a Brazilian Samba dance, and before the girl could look round, Tommy Atkins disappeared in a fast spurt and joined his trotting one hundred friends. The girl was so dumb-founded and ashamed that she could not open her mouth to anyone till after one month. Her companion told the story amidst loud laughter to the other Indian wives in the Staff College. The story was passed on to the wives of Indian officers on the 4th war course with a word of caution not to go on a lonely walk with a colourful tight fitting silk sari wrapped around a tight fitting transparent nylon petticoat and walk like a dreamy marlyn monroe, in high healed shoes.

By April all the coast defence flights of the I.A.F. were doing exceptionally well. Nos. 1,2,3 and 4 squadrons had done exceptionally well in Burma. Squadron Leader Majumdar was awarded D.F.C. Very good reconnaissance was carried out by Lysander pilots. There was practically no air force in Burma and Malaya at the time of the fall of Singapore. Pilots of No. 1 Squadron showed exceptional bravery in bombing some of the Japanese advanced positions at a time when Japan held an air superiorty of numbers in the ration of 100 : 1 in Malaya and Burma. The sky was almost blackened with hundreds of Jap Zero fighters, Whenever an air raid was on. Many of the pilots like P/O Raza, Malse, Raghunath. Anant Narain and F/LT

Prithipal Singh, and F/LT Naranjan Prasad hedge hopped over trees and hills and bombed Japanese troop positions and ammunition dumps. Lord Wavel in one of his despatches particularly mentioned the brave exploits of No. 1 Squadron.

At this time, our troops were gradually being pushed back from Singapore Northwards, towards Malaya and Burma. Bulk of the Indian army was in the western desert of Afrika interlocked with the German Panzers, of the Africa Corps, and the Italian armies in Abyssinia, and at Tobruk, Mesra Matruth, Ben Ghazi etc. etc. Main spear heads of our army in Africa were the 4th and 8th Indian Divisions. A good portion of our army had marched through Iran and occupied that country. This occupation was complete by January 1942.

Nearly two Indian divisions were trapped in the bag in the fall of Singapore. Immediate reinforcements were being sent to Arakan to halt the onward march of the Japanese towards Chittagong, Dacca and Calcutta. Our few sloops were also kept very busy between Chittagong, Trincomalee, Bombay, the Persian gulf and the Red sea. A handful of our brave sailors, and airmen were guarding our vast coastline. Several of our ships were sunk and several of our aircraf thad been shot down, but our young officers and men kept their chins up and did a magnificent job of work. I was very sorry to hear that H.M.I.S. Ramdas was sunk. Lt. Commander Chowdhry's ship also hit a mine in the red sea and sank. Two Lysanders were destroyed by the Japanese. It was very gratifying to note that the Indian army in Africa had routed the Itallians in the battle of Keren and Amba Alagi and had pushed the Italians out of Somaliland, Eritrea, and Abyssinia. In the western desert a very gallant fight was being put up against Rommel's Panzers equipped with Tiger MK IV tanks.

Major Rajindra Sinhjee commanding a Squadron of 2nd Lancers had broken away from a fast tightening grip of a Panzer Brigade. He broke away with his squadron right behind the German lines and had to fight his way back to our own line in a semi circular movement.

Through Malaya and Burma although the

Indian army carried out a glorious pre arranged evacuation, we dug our heels in the battle field of Arakan.

One of our coast defence flights stationed at Vizagapatam had a novel experience. P/O Small with P/O Chaturvedi as his navigator was carrying out a normal patrol over the Indian ocean at a distance of about one hundred miles from the coast line. He was flying a Wapiti aircraft. P/O Chaturvedi had his head well down in the cocpkit and was transmitting a normal patrol passage to the R.A.F. base Vizagapatam. This message probably contained "All is well in the Indian ocean. No enemy movement observed". Suddenly miles away on the horizon, appeared a line of shadows on the ocean. P/O Small rubbed his eyes; took his flying goggles off and looked attentively again. He waggled his wings and his observer P/O Chaturvedi stood up in the back cockpit. Small pointed towards the direction of shadows, and turned right towards them. They both looked in that direction. Certainly it looked like a line of ships. An immediate W/T Code message was sent by means of 2 way W/T. "A line of ships steering North East, 100 miles East of Vizagapatam". The Indian officers thought those to be a convoy of fishing vessels. Pacific ocean was infested with Japanese and American mines. Japan required fish and rice for her troops in the South East Asia. Therefore she had sent these fishing trawlers to the Indian ocean for making a good catch. Message was received back by the aircraft from the combined Naval, Air and Army Head Quarters Vizagapatam. "There is no fishing vessel North West of Singapore. There are no British or American war ships in these waters of the Indian ocean. Look more carefully but do not go too near. Shadow-Shadow them" By this time Small and Chaturvedi had climbed upto about 12,000 feet above sea level and came nearer to the line of ships. They looked and they looked. They shadowed and they shadowed. Within ten minutes they originated the next W/T message to the British Fort Commander at Vizagaptam "I have looked and I have looked. Regret mistake in first message. It is a line of ten very big ships in the centre with a line of slightly smaller ships on either side and with a further

line of still smaller ships on the outer flanks of both sides". A ferocious message came back from the British fort Commander "You damn fool! look more carefully and remember your lectures and slides on ship identifications. This formation you have described appears to be a whole fleet. There is no British or American war ship in the Indian ocean at this time. Look more carefully!" P/O Small and Chaturvedi got a bit closer and scratched their heads in remembering their lectures with the Indian Navy and slides of Japanese war ships taken from Jane's ships of all nations. On looking more carefully and at closer quarters they could not mistake the leading battleship KAGA. By now a swarm of Japanese Zero fighters were returning back after reconnaissance along the coast of Vizagapatam. Flight after flight returned back to the flight decks of four aircraft carriers in the middle of the central line. Small sent an immediate coded message to the fort Commander. "In my opinion the leading ship is KAGA. There are four aircraft carriers in the centre with additional ten battleships and there are two lines of cruisers and destroyers on each flank. The place is infested with Jap zeros. You may not hear more from me. What are my orders? Shall I attack the KAGA" Small and Chaturvedi prepared the nose and tail fuses of the two X250 lb semiarmour piercing bombs as the message was received from British Fort Commander "Well done Sterling work! This is the whole of Japanese grand fleet which has emerged at Vizag after the fall of Singapore. Don't go anywhere near. You will be blown up sky high and shot out of the sky by Jap Zeroes. Shadow-Shadow-Shadow! You will be relieved by a Blenheim for shadow work".

Hara Kari was neither practised nor permitted by the Indian Air Force otherwise P/Os Small and Chaturvedi had decided to have a crack at the KAGA. What chance a Wapiti had against hundreds of Jap Zeros and heavy ack ack guns of the Japanese Imperial Grand fleet which cruised up and down the Indian Coast line without anyone accepting the challenge? In the oriental tales, it was like a flying flea surveying a tiger's posterior or a mosquito attempting to bite the rounded anatomy of an elephant under its tail.

Fort Commander Vizagpatam had sent an immediate 'Emergency Ops' signal to the R.A.F. bases at Madras, Calcutta and Ceylon (Trimcomalee) for R.A.F. reinforcements to come upto Vizagapatam. There were only four shortnose R.A.F. Blenheims at Vizagpatam. The fort Commander did not consider it advisable to use these in attacking the grand fleet and give up the element of surprise. There was a very good chance of attacking the Japanese grand fleet with at least ten squadrons of the R.A.F. by next morning. By now orders had been received from H.Q. South East Asia Command in Arakan by W/T that the Japanese fleet was to be shadowed only, till next morning.

Indian Wapiti was relieved by an R.A.F. Blenheim. P/O Small and Chaturvedi returned to base. They wiped the perspiration off their forehead as they switched off the faithful aircraft. There was a whole group of R.A.F. Royal Navy, Indian Navy and the British and Indian army officers waiting at the aerodrome for pilot's interrogation.

Location of the Japanese Grand fleet by a solitary Wapiti will remain an outstanding land mark in the history of world wars. Next morning a reinforcement of approximately ten British R.A.F. squadrons made up of short nose Blenheims, Beaufighters and Hurricanes took off and patrolled the Indian ocean upto a distance of 150 miles from Vizag but the Japanese grand fleet had moved away to a distance over 200 miles from Vizag. It was not considered advisable for Blenheims alone to attack the grand fleet without the help of Hurricane fighters, as the distance was outside the battle range and endurance of R.A.F. fighter aircraft. Japanese fleet could easily have put up about 200 zero fighters in the air.

The same fleet, few days later turned up off the coast of Ceylon. It had been spotted miles away by an R.A.F. Catalina reconnaissance flying boat. Nearly fifteen Hurricane and Blenheim squadrons of the Royal Air Force were already lying in ambush at Trincomalee. The Jap ships kept well out to sea but a swarm of Zeroes attacked the coastline. There was a good combat between the Hurricanes of the R A.F. and Zeroes of Japanese air Force. Eighteen zeroes were shot down for a loss of eleven Hurricanes. It was a good score, but the ships got away.

A year earlier when I was squadron Leader training and operations at Air H.Q. I had impressed upon Group Captain Bussell and Perry Keane to equip I.A.F. squadrons with modern aircraft. Here we were in the middle of a war against a modern enemy well equipped with upto date aircraft and we were still trotting around with wapiti, and Lysander aircraft. Actually air H.Q. could not be blamed. The poor R.A.F. themselves were not fully equipped. The tempo of war was so colossal that one could not keep one's head above water, as far as equipment was concerned.

By May 1942, Neuclii of Nos. 5, 6, 7, and 8 Squadrons were formed. The first four Squadrons were complete. Nos. 1 and 2 were at Trichnopoly and Madras. Nos. 3 and 4 were at Kohat where a frontier wing had been formed.

The Germans were trying to break through the Caucasus. Iran was already occupied by the Indian army; at least the central and Southern portion. Our troop position in Iraq was not very good. Reinforcements were being flown out from Karachi to Habbaniyah. Mehar Singh was given a special task of joining up with a crowd of British and Indian pilots for ferrying personnel of the Indian army from Karachi to Habbaniyah in twin engined DC3 Dakota aircraft.

One day F/LT Mehar Singh was flying a platoon of the Frontier Force regiment from Karachi. when he landed at Habaniyah, he was met by two British pals F/O's Macki and Mavor of No. 31 transport Squadron R.A.F., India which was also employed on this duty. Mehar was having a hearty chat with the British boys Macki and Mavor. Platoon of the F. F. regiment had smartly marched away. Hardly a few minutes passed in the conversation when the Station Air Raid sirens sounded the alarm for approaching enemy raiders. Station standing orders said that all personnel, officers and airmen must run to the slit trenches on hearing the air raid warning. But Mehar, Macki and Mavor took it easy. Some young pilots always thought it a cowardice to run to the slit trenches at the mere sounding of a distant siren.

By now three silver planes, glittering in the bright sunshine of the middle East appeared over the station. These must have been very high indeed as

they appeared very small. Said Macki "Damn-here are three German Heinkel". All three of them looked up. The silver planes passed on top of the camp. The first salvo of eggs could be seen streaking through the air, followed by more at regular preselected intervals arranged by an electric bomb release gear. A beautiful pattern bombing was done right across the entire camp. Terrific explosions were heard as debris and human limbs and bones were hurled up into he air. This story was told to me by Mehar Singh himself years after the episode.

A direct hit was obtained on the Sergeant's mess, Aircraft hangers and many other vulnerable places. After dischanging a heavy cargo of aerial bombs, the three Heinkels in a beautiful V formation did a complete circuit of Habbaniyah aerodrome. Mehar, Macki and Mavor stood on the same ground and did not utter a word. The leader of Heinkel V formation put his nose into a dive and the two others followed suite. Looking at the three German bombers, there wasn't a shadow of doubt that all three were coming at hell of a pace with their nose glued on to the spot where Mehar, Macki, and Mavor stood gaping at each other in astonishment.

Before one could say 'Jack Robin', Macki fled, followed by Mehar Singh and Mavor. The three headed straight for a slit trench which was at a distance of two hundred yards. Mavor was very thin with scraggy legs. Macki was fat and Mehar Singh had also grown to a huge size. According to Mehar's own words :—

"Jesse owens could not have run the 220 yards in the record time at the Berlin Olympiad of 1932 as Macki and I were covering this distance towards the slit trench. Half way, there was a flash as Mavor went past the two of us in a real Olympic style. I thought that Mavor's scraggy legs could never have carried him to such a fast speed. The inspiration was from the three German Heinkel bombers.

There was a colossal splutter of concentrated machine gun fire from the three twin engined Heinkels. I popped my head out of the slit trench to find out what was happening. Chunks of my D. C. 3 Dakota were flying all over the place. Portions of wings, tail and engines of my Dakota had been blown away. The Hein-

kels went low over the camp, zoomed up to about two thousand feet and disappeared over the north-west horizon.

When I came to inspect my DC3 there was nothing left of it. It was riddled with bullets and chunks of it had been blown away. I was to fly this aircraft back again to Karachi for bringing fur ther reinforcements of Frontier Force, Baluch, and Punjab Regiments to Habbaniyah."

Fourth war course finished at the staff College on 20th July 1942. I shall never forget the telephone battle at the Staff College. A battle raged throughout the night and information came into Divisional Head Quarters every five minutes by means of telephone. I was the Divisional Commander in my syndicate. I am very glad that I shall never be a real divisional Commander in a real battle with the rank of a Major General. Throughout the night there was not a wink of sleep. On the previous course, actual war time conditions were created by actual gun fire and crackers etc, when messages and orders were being written out on paper or spoken on telephone. When I came back from the main building of the Staff College; dawn was just breaking. I had my breakfast and went straight to bed. My wife looked at my pitiable condition with swollen eyes and drowned voice. But the battle had been won by us.

Two days before the termination of Staff College Course, I received a signal from A. H. Q. through the Commandant Staff College, that I was posted to H. Q. No 223 Group R. A. F. Peshawar as Squadron Leader Operations and training. Bob Frogley was also posted to the same Group H. Q. as incharge of organisation. Frogley was really a fine fellow and a good friend. We were very happy to be once again proceeding to Peshawar.

The train slowly moved down the Bolan Pass. Many of the Staff College Students and their wives were on this train. Out of a total of nearly one hundred senior officers students on the fourth war course nearly forty had their wives along with them. This consisted of ten Indian officers and about thirty British officers. The thing that amused us was that almost every wife, Indian or British wore a loose sari or a maternity jacket. Almost all of them were expecting a baby. These staff college students of our course were reall good workers and were

a very able body of men, socially, intelectually, at home or on the battle front.

Throughout the night the train rattled through the rugged Bolan Pass. At crack of down we reached Sibi. By midday we reached Jacobabad in a temperature of 120 °F in the shade. Every first class compartment was given a few heavy trays of ice for cooling down. Heat was unbearable. Electric fans in the compartment produced more heat than keeping the temperature down. I felt very sorry for the ladies who were accompanying us. Night-fall came near Khanpur but still there was no relief from heat. Next morning at Lahore there was a very pleasant shower of rain which lasted for ten minutes and broke the monotony of an unbearable train journey.

At Peshawar I stayed with my brother Ayub who was Superintendent Police. Within a few days married accommodation was allotted to me in the Air Force married quarters. My wife and children went away to a very pleasant and lonely hill station Thandiani near Abbotabad. I reported for duty to Group Head Quarters R.A.F. Peshawar under Group Captain Alec Grey.

Here I found myself back again in the tribal war-fare with Nos. 3 & 4 squadrons pitched against the tribesmen. Only a few days had passed. Group Captain Alec Grey asked me to accompany him to Risalpur where Nos. 3 and 4 Squadrons were practising flypast for the arrival of Duke of Gloucester. A rehearsal for the guard of honour was also arranged. Along with the Group Captain Commanding No. 223 Gronp R.A.F., I inspected the Guard of Honour and watched the fly past. At this time No. 1 squadron I.A.F. were undergoing fighter training on Mohawk and Hurricane single seater fighter aircraft at Risalpur. In the practice flypast Squadron Leader Arjan Singh led a flight of Mohawks with P/O's Raza and Ratnagar followed by three Audaxes flown by Squadron Leader Mehar Singh and P/O's Nur Khan and Asghar Khan of No. 3 Squadron. This flight was followed by a flight of three Lysanders flown by Squadron Leader Janjua, and F/O's Shiv Dev Singh and Dani of No. 4 Squadron. The fly past was really impressive. The guard of honour under

the Command of Flight Lieutenant Maqbool Rabb was also every smart.

In a week's time the Duke of Gloucester came to Risalpur by air. He was accompanied by Air Commodore Willaims Chief of Air Staff from A.H.Q. New Delhi. The Duke had very graciously flown down to Risalpur for presenting a crest to the Indian Air Force. All senior officers of the Indian Air Force had flown down to Risalpur to be introduced to the Duke. We met him in the mess. It was a real hot day. He was drinking gallons of orange squash and was perspiring at the same time. I offered him one more large orange squash with ice. He smiled and exclaimed "Might as well drink this. It all comes out". He was perspiring profusely and was not used to the extreme day heat of the Frontier.

In the morning a Royal Salute was presented to him by the guard of honour as the three squadrons Nos. 1,3 and 4 dipped in salute. Our Guard of honour gave a very smart 'Royal Salute-Present arms'. In the fly past the Audaxes and the Lysanders led by Mehar Singh and Janjua dipped in salute beautifully. Last came the Mohawks with Arjan as leader. P/O Raza was holding his station as No. 2 beautifully but that silly man P/O Ratnagar spoiled the whole. show. He was miles out and later put the blame on a spluttering engine.

A year later in August 1934 when I was on a goodwill mission along with Lt. Commander Siddique Chowdhury in the United States of America; in a press conference at New York arranged by the Indian agent General Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai; Mr. Chamberlain, Editor of New York, Times, who was present at the time of Duke of Gloucester's visit to Risalpur, told me "The Indian Air Force's fly past at Risalpur was a slim show". It was exceedingly unfortunate that Arjan should have picked up a man like Ratnagar for the fly past, when he had fifteen more smart boys who could fly a Mohawk really well. The Duke was quite impressed by the fly past. According to Mr. Chamberlain of the New York times the fly past was a slim show. He was right in the sense that Americans believe in numbers. What Mr. Chamberlain had expected to

see was at least fifty aircraft of a modern type dip in salute for the Royal visitor. Ten days earlier as a Staff officer of Group Captain Alec Grey I had suggested that Nos. 1,2,3 and 4 squadrons should dip in salute to the Royal visitor in full squadron formation. But during war time, the King emperor had himself expressed his views to cut out too much pomp and glory because there was a war on and men were fully employed in fighting the enemy on all fronts.

Air Commodore Williams and Group Captain Grey had themselves expressed the view that the Duke was keen to see His Majesty's Indian Air Force at work and not on show, pomp and glory. I had almost arranged to fill up the sky with Indian aircraft pulled away from Kohat, Miranshah, and Fort Sandeman.

Besides the guard of honour, a hollow square was formed with two large lines of Indian Airmen and officers standing to attention in front. We stood in the line of seniority from the left i.e. Squadron Leader Mukerjee, myself Majumdar, Aspee, Habeebullah Khan, Prithipal Singh, Atam Nanda etc. Etc. Mukerjee and I as the two senior most officers marched upto the Duke of Gloucester who shook hands and presented the crest to Squadron Leader Mukerjee. It was one of the very impressive ceremonies. The guard of honour marched past the Duke and gave an 'eyes left' as the guard Commander Flight Lieutenant Maqbool Rabb saluted. The duke was very happy. A very large number of Pathan villagers had collected at the edge of the aerodrome to meet the younger brother of the king but they were not permitted by Air Force guards to enter the airfield. Later the Duke was photographed with the senior squadron Leaders of the I.A.F. It was a very happy gathering and the Duke smiled all the time. We shook hands with him and bade him goodbye as he left in a car for the aerodrome. He flew to New Delhi from Risalpur. We still have a very happy memory of that occasion at Risalpur. For the Indian Air Force it was a great achievement that a brother of the King Emperor had flown out all the way from England, through an exceedingly dangerous territory of the Middle East which was infested by the Luft Waffe and the Italian Air Force. No other army

unit or the Royal Indian Navy was presented with a crest. This was a singular achievement. Ninety percent of the credit went to Squadron Leader Majumdar's brave operations for four months in Burma during the Japanese invasion. All the boys of No. 1 squadron had put up a gallant show. One D.F.C. and two mentions in despatches were obtained. Well done No. 1 Squadron! Duke of Gloucester was full of praise for the Indian Air Force. War time press gave a tremendous publicity to this event at Risalpur. Even other R.A.F. Indian army, and Navy units were jealous of us.

By September 1942 No. 1 Squadron had completed their fighter training on Hurricane aircraft and had collected their aircraft under the command of Squadron Leader Arjan Singh and pushed off to Ranchi and then to the theatre of operations against the Japanese in Arakan. No. 2 Squadron under the command of Squadron Leader Habeebullah Khan came to the fighter training school Risalpur. They also completed their training and pushed off to Ranchi and Assam with Hurricane aircraft. I forgot to mention that before the visit of Duke of Gloucester at Risalpur, Arjan Singh had been shot down by the tribesmen near Damdil camp in Waziristan, when giving close support by dive bombing the tribesmen who were interlocked in fight with a battalion of the Kashmir state forces. All regular troops of the Indian army had disappeared towards Egypt or Arakan. Waziristan was occupied and defended against the tribes by State forces from Kashmir, Patiala, Nahha, Jind, Bhopal, Jaipur Jodhpur and Hyderabad.

Arjan had dropped about four bombs in close support of a platoon of Kashmir State infantry who were very badly surrounded by the tribesmen. In the fifth dive, Arjan was shot down and crashed in the valley. There was a race between the tribesmen and Kashmir infantry men for who gets to the crashed aircraft, first. In this crash also poor Ghulam Ali was the air gunner. Both Arjan Singh and Ghulam Ali were knocked out and lay out in the open in an unconcious state. Ghulam Ali lost his nerves and ran straight towards the tribesmen. A few years ago on a previous occasion when flying with Mehar Singh, the poor man was shot down

in the Tochi valley. This was his second time. He had such a grim experience of the first crash and a chase by the Wazirs that he was not taking any more chances. He bolted clean out; away from the crash and unknowingly towards the tribesmen. Arjan shouted "You damn fool-Ghulam Ali; come back" Luckily he heard the shout and came running back to the crashed aircraft. Both of them lay flat besides their crashed Audax as a battle royal raged between the Kashmir infantry and the tribesmen for possession of wounded airmen. More Kashmir troops rushed in with automatic fire from Bren guns. Arjan and Ghulam Ali were picked up and taken on stretchers to Damdil camp.

This was one more aircraft claimed by accurate firing of tribesmen. Scores of aircraft both Royal Air Force and Indian Air Force have been shot down on the North West Frontier since 1917-1918 when birdmen made a first appearance over the high hills and deep valleys of the North West Frontier of India. I.A.F. lost several aircraft. Flight Lieutenant Narender was also shot down in a Wapiti aircraft near Spinwam. He was saved by troops of the Kurram Militia but his aircraft was burnt by the hostiles. This happened some times in April 1941, when Narender was commanding a flight at Miranshah. Poor Aspee was hit several times. In November 1937 his controls were shot away in a Westland Wapiti. In May 1941 a piece of shrapnel hit his eye. His cockpit had several bullet holes. On this occasion Aspee was awarded D.F.C. for extreme courage in the face of enemy. Mehar and Arjan were also shot down. We played up hell with the Pathan tribesmen but they in turn gave us hell also. We were not permitted to attack their villages without warning. Then they were too clever and also hid in caves and behind rocks.

In November Habeeb's No. 2 Squadron completed their fighter training. A week before their completion of training, a flight of Audaxes from No. 3 Squadron and a flight of Lysanders from No. 4 Squadron came down to Risalpur to cooperate with the training of an Indian infantry division from Abbotabad which was to proceed overseas to Egypt for operation against the German Africa Corps. Air Cooperation and protection against

enemy aircraft was an essential training for Indian ground troops. I was asked by Group Captain Alec Grey to go down to Risalpur and coordinate the entire cooperation programme with a division of infantry from Abbotabad.

At this time there were no pucca runways at Risalpur. There was a very small grass L shaped airfield hardly enough for Hurricanes to land. Flight of No. 3 and 4 Squadrons was parked in the Eastern corner of the grassy airfield near the R. A. F. mess. A British and an Indian intelligence Liason officer was attached to our flight. An Indian division was in camp, miles out of Abbotabad towards the river Indus side. We cooperated with them for a period of ten days and gave full support with aerial photography, tactical reconnaissance, artillery reconnaisance, long range and strategical recce. On the final two days the entire division was to be given experience of air attack and ack ack work. The scheme was to attack the infantry division in a very vulnerable position when they were crossing the mighty river Indus in small ferry boats at PIHUR.

I led the attack in a Lysander aircraft. Atam Nanda and Shiv Dev Singh followed me with two flights of Hawker Audaxes, and Lysanders and F/O Pant came up with a flight of three Hawker Hurricanes.

I took cover hehind rocks and high hills and led the whole formation of ten aircraft. We swooped down on the infantry troops as they were crossing in small ferry boats. In actual combat such a target would be a sitter for a pilot but ground troops also can play up hell with the aircraft. In this case evary infantry man stood up in the boat and practised firing on the aircraft. This was a wonderful practice for pilots as well as for ground troops. We broke off formation and tackled the ground troops and ferry boats individually for fifteen minutes. Then we formed up again and attacked the divisional Head Quarters at a distance of some thirty miles from PIHUR ferry.

Ten days later Habeeb's entire squadron No 2 IAF came down to Peshawar and had tea with me and my wife in the spacious gardens of the Group married quarters. It was so nice to see Habeeb, Latif, Rippi Reporter, Salahuddin, Satya Narain and other young

pilots dressed up in jungle kit with Gurkha hats and Kukries etc. Each man carried a revolver, first aid and food tablets and water bottles. Next day they collected their Hurrcanes from Bhopal and disappeared towards Ranchi and Assam. Soon they were in operation against the Japanese. I always had a soft corner for No. 2 Squadron as I first formed this squadron and I was the first C. O. from March to June 1941.

In November a dive bombing school was started at Peshawar. We had heard a lot about the Vultee Vengeance dive bombers. Two flights of six Vultee Vengeance dive bombers arrived from Karachi where the Americans had dumped about four hundred of these aircraft. I watched the first six aircraft approach Peshawar. These looked beautiful The sound of engines was terrific. It showed tremendous power and speed. The actual speciality of the Vengeance was its vertical dive at 400 M. P. H. with dive brakes on, and the tremendous bomb load she used to carry as compared to the German Stuka which had a poorer performance.

By December 1942 Nos. 1, 6, 7 and 8 squadrons of the Indian Air Force were fully formed. Number 6 squadron under the able command of squadron Leader Mehar Singh, moved upto Risalpur for conversion training on Hurricane fighter reconaissance aircraft. Simultaneously, No. 7 Squadron under the command of Squadron Leader Hem Chowdhury moved upto Peshawar for conversion training on Vultee Vegeance dive bombers. Both courses were for three months duration. Air Head Quarters organised Nos. 9 and 10 Squadrons on paper. By Now Nos. 1 and 2 were fully employed in the theatre of operations against the Japanese. Nos. 3 and 4 were employed in tribal warfare on an extensive scale. Rifles and ammunitions poured into the tribal territory across the mountains of the North West and the Hindu Kush, from an outside world power. Tribesmen now had the finest rifles and ammunition of a heavy bore. I.A.F. only had a handful of squadrons and all these squadrons were fully employed in operations.

A new tribe entered the arena of conflict against the British Government of India. Frogley and I moved No. 28 Squadron Royal Air Force for Frontier operations; also, in order to lend a helping hand to Nos. 3 and 4 Squadrons

I.A.F. who were hard worked. Once again in the Tochi valley an R.A.F. Lysander of No. 28 Squadron was shot down. The air gunner was killed. British pilot tried to escape and used his .40 colt automatic freely as he ran along the right bank of the river Tochi. A swarm of tribesmen fell on him. As bullets pierced his back he fell forward on his face. Tribesmen jumped on him and cut him into four big pieces with a sharp tribal dagger.

When I entered the Ops. room of the Frontier Group poor Frogley sat at the table almost pulling his hair "This type of nonsense cannot go on any longer. Britain has played about with the tribal territory for a long time. Now we shall have to march in", said he. "Look-they have butchered a British pilot of No. 28 Squadron and made four pieces out of him. The naked body is still lying on the right bank of the Tochi river at a distance of about four hundred yards from the crashed Lysander. Even the very confidential portion of his anatomy has been cut off and put into his mouth".

This was really an outrage. Since the outbreak of tribal warfare in April-May 1937, dead bodies of pilots both Indian and British were returned back. Only 8 months ago, the dead body of Indian pilot officer Sanjana and Air gunner Corporal Sohan Singh shot down near Razmak were returned back to I.A.F. Miranshah for proper military funeral ceremonies. Both the bodies were covered up in white sheets by the tribesmen and brought upto Miranshah on charpais by a party or representatives of that tribe which had shot them down. But this case of butchering of the British pilot in such a cruel and in human manner could not be understood. Either it was the act of a mad man or some other act of extreme provocation. Actually a great mistake was made by a second Lysander's British pilot who was wacthing the whole proceedings. Tribesmen ran towards the British pilot to capture him and put him up for ransom and dictate their terms to the Political Resident in Waziristan, for peace in that particular portion of the Tochi valley. These R.A.F. boys were straight out from England and had no idea of tribal operations on the North West Frontier. Second British pilot commenced to straff and machine gun those tribesmen who were pullingout the dead British air gunner

and running after the crashed pilot to catch him for ransom. Seeing a few more of their comrades straffed and machine gunned from the air, they fell on the crashed pilot who was making good his escape. In a wild temper they butchered him.

Second Lysander; the helping comrade from the air was so shocked to see the multilated body of his dead comrade. He circled round the dead body. In a flash the tribal butchers fled in all directions. They jumped below the deep banks of the Tochi and disappeared behind big boulders and caves. Second Lysander circled round and round. Tears must have come into his eyes. The comrades who were to be helped were already dead. When the second pilot came to Miranshah he was speechless. British Squadron Commander of No. 28 British squadron boiled with anger. He gave orders to bomb upto full load and take full belts of front and rear gun ammunition. He wanted to blow up all the villages in the near vicinity where the British pilot and Air Gunner had been killed.

Group Captain Alec Grey talked to the Governor of N. W. F. Province, Sir George Cunningham on the telephone. No hasty action was to be taken till the British Political resident of Waziristan residing at Razmak had investigated the entire bad episode and authorised aerial bombing and proscription of that area. Such provocations had existed eversince the establishment of British rule in India. These provocations were investigated in a very cool and calm manner.

Frogley and I were told by Alec Grey to go down to Miranshah. I telephoned to Squadron Leader Nanda to send two Audax aircraft to Peshawar. Frogley and I flew down to Miranshah. Nos. 3 and 4 Squadrons moved down to Miranshah for delivering a fairly big punishment programme to the tribes living in that locality of the Tochi river. Open villages were never attacked. Areas were proscribed in which all movement was prohibited. Then the army went in along with the Tochi Scouts and commenced to pull some of the houses of the outlaws down. A large number of tribesmen were arrested in that locality.

By the end of December 1942, H. Q. No. 223 Group R. A. F. moved down to Rawalpindi which was

the Head Quarters of Northern Command for the army. In the beginning of January 1943, a new Head Quarters of the Frontier Wing was created at Peshawar. Group Captain Wingate was given command of this wing which consisted of No. 3 and 4 squadrons at Kohat and the Wing H. Q. at Peshawar. Group Captain Wingate was the brother of the famous General Wingate Commander of the famous Chindit group of Commandos operating on the other side of the Hump, in Chinese territory.

Group Captain Wingate was one of the most perfect officers I have met in my career in the Air Force. He was a very good pilot and an extremely intelligent man. He was a good sportsman. He was sent out to India to command a wing of Beau-fighters somewhere at Cuttack, Vizagapatam, or Madras. He was sent temporarily to Peshawar to look after the Frontier Wing for a few months till sufficient numbers of Beau-fighters were available along the Southern Coast of India.

Upto the end of March 1942 Group Captain Wingate remained at Peshawar. On the final passing out and completion of conversion of dive bomber training of No. 7 Squadron. we made Wingate perform a few acrobatic tricks on the mess furniture. He was really wonderful at his age.

I. A. F. station Kohat had arranged a dinner and dance at the officers mess. We all went down to Kohat by cars. A friendly Hockey match was played. Frontier wing (Nos. 3 and 4 Squadrons) against a combined team from the conversion courses of No. 7 dive bomber Squadron Peshawar, and No. 6 fighter recce Risalpur. I played as centre forward and captain of the Frontier wing. Squad. ron Leader Janjua who was a very good half back, also played for the Frontier Wing. We won the friendly game. At night there was a terrific beat up party at the mess. A dance was arranged. Hem Chowdhury and Group Captain Wingate came to tip us out of bed at night. They succeded and we were on the floor. This was one of the most happy reunions of Indian Squadrons. I wish Nos. 1, 2, and 8, 9 and 10 Squadrons were at Kohat also. Kohat, Peshawar and Risalpur were the happiest stations for the Indian Air Force. We lived like brothers. There was no distinction between Hindu, Muslim, Sikh. Parsee or Christian.

In April, No 7 Squadron went away to Cambellpur and No. 6 went to Bhopal. In their place no. 8 Squadron under the command of Squadron Leader Naranjan Prasad came to Peshawar for dive bomber training and No. 9 Squadron came to Risalpur for Fighter reccee training.

During the previous month a very interesting demonstration was arranged at Risalpur for the benefit of the army. At a little distance from Risalpur Aerodrome six Wellington twin engined dropped a whole company of Indian para troopers into a field This was a magnifIcient show as all these men gathered their N, C. O. leaders and captured a marked out post with incredible speed. Then a flight of Hurricane fighters flown by R. A. F. instructors bombed and machine gunned certain targets which contained explosives and inflamable stuff. Flight of R. A. F. Hurricanes flown by instructors from the conversion school at Risalpur was followed by a flight of Hurricanes flown by Indian pilots and led by Mehar Singh and a flight of Vultee Vengeances also flown by Indian pilots and led by Hem Chowdhury. The funny thing was that the R. A. F. instructore completely missed the targets. Not a single target was set on fire. Both the Indian flights set their allocated targets on fire and disappeared over the Kabul river. This demonstration was watched by nearly four hundred British and Indian officers. A terrific wave of laughter went round as the R. A. F. instructors with the battle of Britain fame, missed all their targets and Indian pupils hit every target which was there.

Actually it was not the fault of the R. A. F. instructors who were chiefly employed on teaching aerobatics and fighter drill and tactics to the Indian pupils. Our boys had fired thousands of rounds in tribal operations and practice machine gun at the foot of the Khyber Pass and at Kohat and Miranshah.

Aspee came to Peshawar in April and complained to me that at Air Head Quarters there was a Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Nadir Shahi regime. No one cared about the poor Indian Air Force. Squadrons lay sprinkled all over the countryside and in Arakan with no one to look after them. Everyone in Air H.Q. was keen in promoting himself to a higher rank. If S. A. S. O. increased a bar to his shoulder, every other officer went up by one stripe.

Senior Indian Squadron Leaders of one status and seniority were rotting all over the place while ex. sergeants like Ginger Middleton and Bishop of No. 60 Squadron R. A. F. Ambala were promoted to the rank of an acting Group Captain Commanding R. A. F. station Dum Dum. This was really fantastic. We with our Cranwell training and years of seniority in our own country will have to salute types like Ginger Middleton and Flight Sergeant Bishop etc. It is really getting very embarrassing." I agreed with Aspee that I shall put in a request to Air Head Quarters Delhi for command of an Indian wing. After all we now possessed ten Squadrons of the Indian Air Force which were, operating against a modern and powerful enemy.

I put in my request to Air Head Quarters in early April 1943 for command of an Indian Wing. Mukerjee had already been promoted and posted to Air H. Q. Majumdar who was a junior pilot in my flight was also promoted to the rank of a Wing Commander. I received orders on about the 25th May that I was posted to America with the rank of a Squadron Leader. This came as a great surprise. I had asked for command of two Indian Squadrons in Arakan and I was posted to Washington D. C. on a goodwill Military mission.

In the stories from Arabian Nights, one always heard that if a Human Being asked a Jinnee for a certain favour; directly the opposite was done. At this time some senior officers in Air Head Qnarters New Delhi were either being influenced by some Jinnee or they had been reading stories from the Arabian Nights. Short and long of the story is that I was posted to Washington D.C. Further orders were to follow. My wife wept when she came to know that I was posted to America. I was very much moved by the sorrow of the wife. I thought the poor darling was frightened of enemy action across the air space of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. I consoled her "Please be a brave girl, after all I have to lead an Indian Wing in Arakan after a few months. Travel in Military aircraft is very very safe across the African desert or the Mediterranean". But it was not enemy action which was worrying my wife; it was the glamour and the fast life of American dames which was on the poor girl's mind. "Please take me with you-

I cannot trust you with those fast American women" was the reply. This amused me and I had a good laugh.

Next few days were spent in getting my inoculation and other certificates ready. I had already flown a Hurricane at Risalpur. I was very keen to try my hand at the Vultee Vengeance dive bomber. I asked a British instructor, F/O Waterson to give me a trip in a Vengeance and show me all the gadgets. He was an exceedingly nice fellow. He gave me a trip and showed me all the gadgets. He told me to repeat the rhyme TM-P-FF-TAG in checking up Trim, mixture, Pitch, Fuel, flaps, Tail wheel, Amperes, and Gills before take off and landing. I took off and thoroughly enjoyed the solo trip. It was a beautiful aircraft.

It used to give me great pleasure in watching boys of No. 8 Squadron carry out their dive bombing exercises. Sen was the first fellow to make a belly landing. With what shattering noise a Vangeance touched her belly on the ground! After a few days F/O Chand and F/O Waterson were killed in a crash where a Vengeance never pulled out of a dive. I went to pick up the dead bodies, and was the first one to put the dead bodies, on the stretchers. What a shattering sight! Poor Sahney, Chand's Air Gunner and Navigator was broken hearted. A few days later Sandhu hit the ground at the foot of the Khyber Pass when carrying out front gun attack on the ground targets. The aircraft hit the ground with a terrific thud and then it went up nearly 200 feet up in the air like a burning ball of fire. Sahney was the range safety officer. His nerves were completely shattered after Chand's death and after seeing sandhu's aircraft as a ball of fire that disintegrated in mid air.

One evening my wife; and Mrs. Naranjan Prasad, and I stood on the balcony of Capitol Cinema in Saddar Peshawar Cantt waiting for a Movie show to commence. Miles away towards the setting sun, No. 8 Squadron of Vangeance aircraft came in Squadron formation. This was their last flight over Peshawar and over the Khyber Pass before the termination of their training Programme at the Dive bombing School. What a picturesque sight an Indian Squadron made over their own native country!

By the middle of June, No. 8 Squadron were posted away down south to collect their Vangeance aircraft from Allahabad and then proceed to Arakan. Naranjan Prasad, his wife and I were in the same train, upto Delhi. At Delhi I stayed with Major and Mrs. Rudra. What good friends they were! Aspee, Jick and I used to visit the New India Coffee House quite often for iced coffee at night. Dry heat at this time of the year was simply unbearable. Delhi was full of American troops. Hundreds of Anglo Indian Christian and Indian girls flirted about with the American troops. They had the money, jeeps, free petrol, bars of candy, cigarettes and money in their pockets. Anything else; we had just as much as the Americans had if not more. But unfortunately that did not count. It was pure and simple money and the enjoyment that Americans could provide. Cannaught Place was full of whistling G.I'S. Every good looking woman you saw was in the company of an American. Tonga wallas, taxis, and restaurants were making tremendous amount of money. If you saw galloping tongas in Connaught Circus with shouts of 'Yippee'-'Youhooo'-and cat calls, it was the Americans. Davicos and other restaurants were full of gitter-bugging Americans and anglo Indian girls. I am very glad to say that no decent Indian girl in a Sari was seen with cheap types of American G.I's who thought they could win war on cocoa cola and gitter bugs. It was only the cheap types of Anglo Indian girls who were in the sexual embrace of American G.I's during 24 hours of the day.

I called at Air Head Quarters. My word, I was amazed! The entire Imperial Secretariat once the strong hold of the ablest officers of the three defence services was full of women in uniform. All types of bograts from civilian life wore high ranking uniforms. Every flying officer and a lieutenent had a Popsy in uniform as Private Secretary. In the evening Chelmsford Club, Davico's and Roshan Ara Club had music and dance. Hundreds of stuges in uniform whirled around in Viennese Waltzes holding pretty women in their arms. War is a funny thing. Some of the poor honest to God lovers of their country have to fight the battle and die while others dance around with music and enjoy gaiety of life.

We met Major Rajendra Sinhjee who had just

returned back from the United States of America after spending about three months on a good will mission. He was very pleased to see me. He and I were in the Indian Coronation Contingent during May 1937. He informed me that his tour was a great success. He gave a short talk on the expansion of the Indian army and the work of 4th and 8th Indian Divisions in North Africa. Battles of Karen and Amba Alagi were well described. A brave fight put up by a squadron of the 2nd Lancers commanded by Major Rajandra Sinhjee against a German Panzer Brigade which had surrounded them was also described. Americans had been exceedingly nice to him and had almost put their arms round him.

I called on Air Marshal Sir Richard Pearce. Several publicity photograps were taken for Indian Newspapers. Then Mukerjee took me round Air Head Quarters. In the evening Lt. Commander Chowdhry and his brother Mr. Latif threw a very big party at the Chelmsford Club. We met all the old comrades like Lt. Commanders Chakraverty, Soman etc. Next day Mukerjee asked me to dinner at his house. His charming wife Sharda was away at a hill station as the heat of Delhi was almost unbearable.

After completing yellow fever inoculation; Lt. Commander Chowdhry and I left for Karachi, on the first lap of our journey to Washington D.C. by Indian National Airways. Captain Namjoshi was flying a DC2. Manilal, Chief Pilot of I N.A. was also on board. After take off, Namjoshi asked me to fly the aircraft and keep it on the proper course upto Karachi, under his direct supervision. He landed the aircraft at Jodhpur and Mauripore (Karachi). For a week we had to remain at Karachi and wait for passage aboard a B.O.A.C. Sunderland (Canopus) type four engined flying boat.

Karachi Airport was taken over by the American (U.S.A.A.F.) R. 101 hanger was used as an assembly workshop for hundreds of Kitty Hawk, Toma-Hawk, and Thunderbolt propeller driven fighters which were being used by the American Air Force Squadrons in South East Asia. I went to see Captain Finglas an old friend of mine at the airport. The place was full of American troops and officers. Finglas had asked a few American officers and N.C.O's to his house for dinner. I met a

few very interesting Americans who gave me an address of their people in New York and asked me to look them up. I was very pleased ihdeed.

City of Karachi was full of American troops of the United States Army Air Force. Every troop had an Anglo Indian, Indian Christian, or a Goanese girl friend with him. There were thousands of jeeps all over Manora, Sandspit, and Hawkes Bay. Grand hotel Malir had a double jitter-bug band playing thrice a day during lunch, tea, and dinner. God alone knows where so many dames in skirts sprang up from, in Karachi which was an Indian city? Coca Cola, Candy, Cigarettes, and tinned food was being distributed to all the relations of these skirted dames in thousands of tons. Every American Corporal had a Jeep full of petrol at his disposal and invariably a good looking Goanese dame by the side. What was wrong with us, the King's Commissioned Indian and British officers who belonged to this country? We probably had no Coca Cola, Candy, Cigarettes and pine apple juice tins given free by the Government. Every Indian and British Officer was not permitted to run his own car as petrol was rationed. On the battle field even drinking water was rationed and given on a scale of one Burmah Shell 2 gallon tin can for a mule and man together, per day. Our lovely cars were jacked up in our homes for the duration of the war.

Captain Fingles told me a nice story. Early in 1943 a batch of about 200 young American red cross girls arrived at the American Air Base Karachi Airport. Thousands of American G.I's saluted the arrival of about ten Skymaster aircraft and the beautiful red cross sisters with smiles and shouts of 'Vive La States of America'. The Colonel Commanding the air base himself was a young boy and saw no harm in moonlight parties between G,I's and blondes of the Red Cross. Mr. Minwalla's Grand Hotel at Malir provided very good hot music and delicious American three rose Whisky. The result was obvious. Captain Finglas laughed. "When I came to the terminal building one day" said Fingie "Two hundred of the Red Cross lassies were being repatriated back to the United States in Skymaster aircraft within five months of their arrival in Karachi. I asked one of the G.I's - "What is cooking around here-brother!" He

replied- "Two hundred of the pretty blondies could not stand the moonshine of Malir. They are unserviceable and are being repatriated back to the States". Fingie laughed again. I laughed also, There was a shortage of white women, in Karachi. These red Cross girls must have been very popular.

At last the day came. Lt. Commander Siddique Chowdhury and I got into B.O.A.C's passengers bus at the Carlton Hotel. A Sunderland flying boat took off from the Marine base at West Wharf. The flying boat went round Manora point. In due course we made three inter-mediary landings at Jiwani, Jask and at a third seaplane station in the Persian gulf before alighting in the river Tigris-Euphrates at Basra. We stayed at Shat-ul-Arab Hotel Basra. This was a comfortable place and our room was air conditioned. At night dinner was served outside, on the lawns. There was a string orchestra also playing in a corner of the garden. I shall never forget the wallowing of a flying boat over the high hills on the way to Basra. One poor woman was so terribly air sick that she had to be left behind at Basra.

Next day we took off from the site of the boat bridge fairly early in the morning. A landing was made in the dead sea and good lunch was provided to all passengers in a local restaurant by the side of a lake and a delightful little beach. Many men women and children had come to this place in beach wear for bathing etc. We reached Cairo at about 5 P.M. Two Indian King's Commissioned officers had come to the banks of the river Nile to receive us. As usual Egyptian Police, Customs and Health authorities took a full one hour before clearing passengers. We reached an Indian Officer's hostel which was being managed very well by an English woman. In Cairo we were marooned for ten days. Air transportation was being carried out on a very large scale, by the Transport Command of the Royal Air Force. War was in full swing. Battle of all Alamein had been won by the Indian Army under the able command of Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinlek. General Ritchie had carried out a small tactical mistake which had given General Rommel's Panzers the upper hand. This mistake was very quickly remedied by Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck of the Nahakki Pass fame in the Mohmand territory of N.W.

Frontier of India when he was a Brigade Commander in 1933.

Cairo was full of international troops. Never has swindling been carried out to such excellence as was being done by the Egyptians in Cairo. Our cities of Calcutta Delhi, Karachi, Bombay, and Madras were bad but Cairo was sky high. Siddique Chowdhry and I stayed for one day in a second class hotel, We were ruined for a month as far as our financial position was concerned. Hotel employees demanded a tip on every foot step. We quickly moved to the Indian Commissioned Officers Hostel managed by an elderly English woman. Here we spent only a few shillings per day. Food was good and our rooms were quite comfortable. This hostel was being used by those Commissioned Indian officers who were in transit to the battle front in the Western desert or who came to Cairo on a few days leave from the theatre of of operations. No one stayed more than ten days.

One day Siddique and I paid a visit to the Algazira Club which was reserved for officers. At the swimming pool there were a few hundred officers, both men and women. We both had a nice swim in the pool. We came out; changed and had some tea. Taxies were exceedingly expensive. So we walked back to the Indian Officers hotel. The sun had set. We passed a river bridge. Two British convoys of heavy six wheeled vehicles were passing both up and down the road. There was tremendous amount of whistling going on. I told Siddique "Something is happening-otherwise there would not be so much whistling and cooing". Both convoys were British. As I looked more carefully; I noticed that the drivers of the Convoy coming up the road were all ATS girls in Khaki uniform. Convoy going down the road consisted of men. Now I understood why so much whistling and cooing was going on.

In the evening Siddique and I changed into tunics and slacks and went down to a famous hotel for dinner. There was a cabaret and a floor show on. There were hundreds of officers and women in uniform. from so many nationalities of the allies. A very smart looking Wac and a Wren sat on a table next to ours. I told Siddique "Come on brother-here is a nice chance if you want to dance" If Cairo was crowded with yanks also; every good looking woman

would have disappeared before you had a chance of asking her for a dance. English girls were much more sporting than our own girls in India who had gone mad after the Americans. An English girl always had a soft corner for officers and men of British empire.

After paying repeated visits to Headquarters of R. A. F. transport command for a period of ten days we were on board a four engined Liberator aircraft at Almaza Airport. This aircraft took nearly eight hours to get to Gibralter. I am quite positive that over Benghazi, and Tobruk etc. a fighter cover must have been provided for all transport aircraft of the Royal Air Force in order to provide a safe passage through a nest of long range German Messerschemidt and Focke Wolf 109 fighters. Two days before we crossed over to Gibralter; a British flying boat was shot down just off Gibralter, and a British famous star of the stage, Leslie Howard was killed along with the entire number of crews and passengers. Some tea and sandwiches were served. We were about fifteen passengers consisting of British army and naval officers.

At Gibralter there were thousands of fighter and bomber aircraft parked all over the place. One wondered at the vulnerability of such a sitting target. Not knowing the exact defence scheme of Gibralter, it was an easy conclusion that a magnificient radar and fighter defence of Gibralter was in existence to ward off German long range bombers attacking Gib; from bases in occupied France. We had about four hours stay in Gibralter. I looked out of the balcony of our hotel and saw two British admirals watching something down below in the street, with peels of laughter. I looked down below to find the street full of British sailors and two fellows in a drunkenmood giving demonstration of 'Lambeth Walk' and 'Bumsy Daisy,. This amused me also and I shouted for Siddique to come and have a look at the performance of the Navy.

We went to a restaurant for a cold drink. This was an ordinary place and was packed with sailors and soldiers. A few Spanish girls sat on the knees of a few naughty sailors and soldiers. This was not such a good place. Apparently there was no usual restriction on officers, sailors and soldiers and airmen to visit this place. So we quickly left.

Supper was given to us at the airport. I watched the red danger lights on top of the high rocks of Gibralter, as our Liberator taxied out towards the end of the runway. Looking through the port hole, I saw thousands of British and American fighters and bombers parked by the side of taxiways on hardstandings. Gibralter must have been an extremely difficult aerodrome to land at night in bad visibility and presence of those famous high rocks. But later when I saw Essention island and a runway which actually went through a rock, with sea at both ends, I said to myself "This is a devil of an aerodrome to get in or get out of." Gibralter was a child's play as compared to Essentien Island.

Just at break of dawn we landed at Lynam aerodrome in England. A very good breakfast was served by a WAAF Corporal. Since leaving Delhi this was the first time that good condensed milk was served with porridge. Sugar and eggs were rationed but we got enough. An R. A. F. transport bus brought the entire lot of fifteen passengers to London. This was my third visit to England after having spent three years with the Royal Air Force from 1930 to 1933, and then a visit with the Indian Coronation Contingent during May 1937.

Things appeared to have changed considerably as the bus sped along the country roads to London. I saw scores of aerodromes to the right and left of the road. Hurricanes and Beaufighters could be seen dispersed at selected places and in the middle of trees etc. Many fields that looked like aerodromes with dispersed aircraft were a mere clever camouflage.

In London our immediate need was to get to a good hotel and then report to India Office. Siddique made a good suggestion. He was on a torpedo course in U. K, only a month ago and he knew all the ins and outs of London. My experience was that of peace time when things were gay and bright. I agreed with Siddique's suggestion and we turned up at the officer's hotel and rest house which used to be Hotel Splendid opposite the Green Park. We were given single rooms on the third floor. A hot bath and lunch was most welcome. No waiters, or waiteresses were available. A few officer's wives carried out voluntary work in this hotel at meal times. They merely arranged the food on a long table. All officers had to help themselves. This

hotel was probably being used for those officers who were on war leave from overseas theatres of operations.

In the afternoon we called at the India Office. I paid a courtesy call to our High Commissioner Sir Runganadan at his office. I condoled the death of his brave son Squadron Leader Henry Runganadan who was killed near Hyderabad Sind in a Lockheed Hudson aircraft when F/O Ratnagar chopped the tail of the Hudson with the propellor of his Hurricane. Henry was a junior officer in my 'A' flight of No. 1 Squadron. Later Henry commanded A flight of No. 2 Squadron I.A.F. at Fort Sandeman when I was he Squadron Commander at Peshawar. I was very sorry and conveyed my sorrow to his father. The old man was very brave and took it calmly. No tears came to his eyes.

Next day Siddique and I expected a cup of tea at least from Sir Runganadan. I happened to be his son's Squadron Commander and his second son Mark was also a friend of mine. During the Coronation in 1937 when we called on Sir Feroze Khan Noon, our High Commissioner in London; he immediately took us to lunch at his house. Majority of the officers in the Indain Coronation Contingent were asked to a big reception at the India House. But now nothing happend.

At night I was woken up by a grim wailing air raid siren. A very dim light burned in my room. I was keen to see what happened in an air raid. I put on my blue uniform and came down the stair case, out-side the entrance door of hotel Splendid. Streets were in pitch darkness. A sailor and a soldier went by followed by an Air Raid Warden on a bicycle. The entrance door of Hotel Splendid opened. It was the old lady receptionist going back home at 1 A. M. in the morning. "What are you doing here in the street in an air raid" she said. I replied I want to see what happens in an air raid". Search lights from St. James's park were very active and scanned the sky in cross traversing beams of high intensity light. Distant firings of Ack Ack guns towards the Thames estuary could be heard. Next morning we read the news at Breakfast time that two German raiders dropped bombs over the Thames estuary but could not get any farther.

Siddique went to look up some friends. I was alone for two days. Overseas Club was a nice meeting place. Many of our students, and officers of the Defence Services used to visit the overseas Club. On Saturdays at tea time a really good programme of music tea and dance was arranged. I met many interesting friends here. Many WAc. WAAF, and WREN officers and other ranks also used to come to the overseas club. The Secretary and the organiser was a retired British Officer of the Indian Army. He took tremendous amount of interest in the club and promotion of good feelings between different members of various nations. It was a very noble work. Such organisations are exceedingly popular. The overseas club situated just off Piccadilly created a tremendous amount of good will towards the British nation. They really are a wonderful nation, no doubt!

I was determined to meet my friends, the senior officers of the Royal Air Force. So I walked upto Kingsway and the Air Ministry. At this time, staff work was being done by almost invalided types of officers. I talked to a deaf, old Squadron Leader who took me to see Air Marshal Sir Joubert De La Ferte Chief of the Fighter Command of the Royal Air Force. Sir Joubert was exceedingly pleased and enquired a lot about the Indian Air Force. I informed him that we had ten squadrons in the field who were doing good work side by side with their brothers of the Royal Air Force in Burma and Arakan. He was very happy indeed and took me in his car to see Air Chief Marshal Sir Edgar Ludlow Hewitt. We motored down at least ten miles till we came to the office of Air Chief Marshal Sir Edger Ludlow Hewitt. This was somewhere near the river Thames. Air Chief Marshal was really pleased to see me and enquired about the expansion of the Indian Air Force. I informed him that we had ten squadrons out of which eight were fully employed in the front line against the Japanese. Two were under formation and training and were to be sent out.

A month before I left on a goodwill tour of the United States of America, I had gone down to Lahore for a recruiting programme. A British Colonel from the army, Khan Bahadur Shahban, Sir Dattar Singh and

I were members of the recruiting board. Previously also, about six months ago when I was the only Indian officer-in-Charge of Operations and training of I. A. F. at Air H. Q. I had been asked to be a member of the combined recruiting board in Delhi during January 1942, under the chairmanship of Sir Jawala Prasad Srivastava.

Our recruiting board was going very well indeed. We selected a large number of youngmen from the colleges at Lahore for entry in the Commissioned ranks of the army, Navy and the Air Force. The interview provided some humorous moments also. If any candidate was keen to answer questions on agriculture and farming, there was always a good laugh from the members of the board because we knew that Sir Dattar Singh had a big dairy farm in Lahore and the poor candidate would have to answer so many questions.

While I was in Lahore, the news came that Squadron Leader Habeebullah Khan was killed on active service. His dead body was brought to Lahore Cantonment where his wife lived in a bungalow along the Mall. Habeeb was commanding No. 2 Squadron at Imphal in Assam. Some stupid Wing Commander at Ranchi sent a signal to Imphal in the middle of operations against the Japanese and in the middle of monsoonic season to come to Ranchi six hundred miles away for a Squadron Commander's Conference. So many junior officers with no idea of operations and flying in bad weather during the monsoons commanded Wing stations in India. Some of them had done two sweeps over the English Channel without seeing a German aircraft on the horizon but went about with the top button of their tunics opened, as a hero of the battle of Britain. The actual heroes of the battle of Britain were dead and gone. Those who thought themselves to be the heroes were not the real heroes. Fancy asking a poor Squadron Commander from Imphal six hundred miles away to fly down to Ranchi in the terrible thunder storms of the monsoon in Hurricane fighter aircraft which were not fitted up with radio compasses and could not be successfully used for long range blind flying. F/O's Jaswant Singh, Salahuddin and Nazirullah told Habeeb to explain to Wing Commander Commanding R.A.F. station Ranchi that very successful operations were being conducted

against the Japanese who were at a stones throw from our aerodrome at Imphal, but a long range flight to Ranchi six hundred miles away over perilous hills of Assam and Bihar, in the middle of the terrible thunder storms and torrential rainfall of the monsoons, was almost impossible. At Imphal whenever there was a gap between heavy clouds full of rain, all British and Indian squadrons used to carry out a reconnaissance and plastering of the Japanese lines and used to return back before Imphal valley was closed up by heavy clouds and blinding rain.

But Habeeb was a brave fellow. "I shall go to Ranchi in my own Hurricane and return back by tomorrow evening after seeing the Wing Commander", was the reply. Habeeb made a perfect flight over the hills of Assam covered in thick black clouds and heavy rainfall and lightening. After covering 400 miles he landed at one of those thousands of aerodromes and landing strips constructed by the army throughout East Bengal and Bihar. He picked up enough petrol and oil and set course for Ranchi. He had hardly gone a few miles when he entered a pitch dark cloud with flashes of multipronged lightening and thunder. He stuck to his compass course and called up a few aerodrome towers on a very high frepuency radio telephony. He was making good progress through rain, lightening and thunder. His aircraft must have bumped about considerably but Habeeb was a determined type of an aviator and an exceptional navigator as he was the only Indian officer who had completed an R.A.F. Navigation course successfully at Murree during June-August 1938. This course was conducted by Squadron Leader Reade of the Royal Air Force who was the Command Navigation officer at that time.

Near Ranchi, the storm was getting much worse instead of improving. On his established, time, of arrival as calculated by Dead reckoning, Habeeb came down to a thousand feet in order to locate Ranchi Aerodrome, Habeeb was shocked to see hills alround and no sign of Ranchi Aerodrome. He was still in a blinding rain and low clouds with his petrol almost finishing. In a desperate attempt, Habeeb called all the code names of control towers in the vicinity of Ranchi. He also repeated an SOS in the code words of radio telephony;

but in heavy rain and thunder storm, a radio telephony wavc on a very high frequency has no chance at all if the aircraft is very far from the tower and at a low altitude, and in a tbunder storm. Hearing no reply and message of help and direction from the nearest aerodrome, Habeeb decided to choose a small field nearby and make a landing. He selected a beautiful little field and made a perfect landing. His aircraft ran for about three hundred yards. Then it hit a big stone and turned upside down. The machine gun telescopic sight hit Habeeb in the head and one eye. His artery joining the eye to the brain was severed and Habeeb was killed instantaneously. This happened near Hazari Bagh in Bihar. Habeeb's body was carried to the British Military hospital Ranchi for Post mortem. There was not a scratch on his body. It was the gun sight that killed Habeeb. If Habeeb had made a belly landing or pulled his wheels in after the first hundred yards; he would have got away with this landing. In 1940 also Habeeb had got away after plonking a Hart in the bed of the river Malir. I had to fly this aircraft back to Q flight at Drigh Road Karachi.

Habeeb's body was flown to Lahore in a Lockheed Hudson aircraft from Ranchi. I was shocked to hear of Habeeb's death. As the coffin was lowered into the grave, Habeeb's loving wife was so stricken with grief that she almost fell into the grave on the body of her husband. This incident of extreme grief and sorrow was so depressing for the whole of the Indian Air Force.

Many British and Indian pilots were being killed due to errors of navigation caused by thunder storms of the monsoonic disturbances. Within the same period the entire No. 6 Squadron Commanded by Mehar Singh was wiped out by a thunder storm between Bhopal and Ranchi. Only Mehar Singh got through to Ranchi to learn that the Squadron consisting of twelve Hurricane aircraft was wiped out by the storm. Several pilots crashed on tree tops in the thick jungle. Others jumped by parachutes and broke their spine on tree tops.

Hardly a few weeks passed when another catos trophe befell No. 4 squadron commanded by Squadron Leader Janjua. Half the squadron was written off when a British flight commander very gallantly carried on with the flight to Bhopal while Janjua and four pilots flying

Hurricanes returned back to the base at Ranchi, after seeing the intensity of a monsoonic thunder squall. A British Flight Lieutenant, and four Indian pilots including F/O Tayabjee, and Sanjana etc. were killed. After losing their way, they ran short of petrol and crashed in a thick jungle. What a misfortune! What was the necessity of sending fighter aircraft over long range distances through a thickly jungled country with high hills, and in the middle of monsoonic storms which lasted for a period of three months only. Many a British squadron and Indian squadron and pilots were wiped out more due to the inconsiderate arrangement of some stupid Wing Commander or a Group Captain sitting in Delhi or Calcutta with a bottle of whisky and soft music and popsies. Many of these high ranking officers had no experience of flying through severe storms during the three months of the monsoons. Fighter aircraft were extremely difficult to ferry across the thickly wooded hills of Assam and East Bengal in stormy weather. Sufficient number of aircraft should have been dumped in Assam in good weather or at least the fighter aircraft should have been dismantled and sent with road convoys of six wheeler trucks, during the period of three months of the monsoonic disturbances. Afterall six wheeler convoys were going upto Imphal every day. A few hundred British and Indian pilots were killed and just as many valuable aircraft written off by bad arrangements made by a few stupid officers who had done one sweep over the English Chanel and were posted to the Wing and Group Stations of Bhopal, Ranchi, Calcutta etc. as Station Commanders. They had no idea of the country, its climate end the monsoons, and the people. Old time veterens like Bouchier, Philip Haynes Peter Broad, Horsley, Basil Ambry, Hamblin etc. would have been so very useful in the higher commands of India.

While in London I once again called at India office and expressed a desire to see a batch of forty junior Indian Pilot Officers who were in the preliminary training establishment at Harrowgate. I had followed progress of these boys from Walton Lahore to Jodhpur and Secunderabad. It was my duty to see them now at Harrowgate.

India office arranged a first class train trip to

Harrowgate for me. I was also advised by India office to pay a courtesy call on Lady Bomanjee of Bombay who had such a lovely house at Harrowgate. She was exceedingly sweet to all Indian pilot officers under going training at Harrowgate. She used to call all of them in turn to her house for tea or meals.

When I reached Harrowgate I was exceedingly happy to see the boys. They were happy also to find that a senior squadron Leader of the Indian Air Force instead of shooting a tigaa at Poonaah or dancing around with pretty popsies of Piccadilly had passed a sleepless night in a train for looking them up at Harrowgate. I spoke to them for a few minutes in a quiet corner of the educational institution. I told them to work had and keep up the good name of their country. My own inspiration had been derived from the visit of Doctor Moonje who visited us at Royal Air Force College Cranwell in January 1931. Dr. Moonje was a great Maharatta Political Leader from Poona. He was exceedingly keen on the expansion of the Indian Defence Services. Dr. Moonje was a member of the Selection Board at Metcalfe House New Delhi in November 1929 when I was selected for the R.A.F. College Cranwell. He told me that he remembered me in the interview at Metcalfe House Old Delhi in November 1929. Doctor Monjee had visited London along with Mahatama Gandhi and Motilal Nehru and others during the round table Conference in 1931. He had enough martial spirit and a spirit of nationalism to look us up at Cranwell and also our collegues Prem Singh Gayani at Woolwich, Hayauddin Raza, Afzal, Ataa, Dubey, Dutt and others at Sandhurst. It was really significant that Doctor Moonje who was a civilian had taken the trouble of driving upto Cranwell, Sandhurst and Woolwich on a cold wintry day in order to look up a few Indian cadets undergoing military training in those wonderful institutions. At that time Colonel Sir Malik Umar Hayat Khan Tiwana who held the rank of a British Colonel and who used to be one of the very few who were permitted to fly a flag on his big saloon car never bothered to look up the Indian cadets at Cranwell, Sandhurst and Woolwich.

I spoke to our junior pilot officers nicely and in a sympathetic tone. They were very happy to see me.

The boys were doing well in their training and they were very popular with the civilians of Harrowgate. Many of the boys were asked to tea and dinner by people living in Harrowgate. War was on and boys from the empire were popular with everyone in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

I was asked to dinner by Lady Bomanje. This was exceedingly sweet of her. Billimoria collected me from the Officer's Mess Harrowgate. We walked down towards a very fine mansion which Lady Bomanje was occupying. Half way, P/O Billimoria who was the senior most of these officers, introduced me to Lady Bomanje's son who was in uniform and was going out on duty with the fire watchers.

I spent a very happy hour and a half at Lady Bomanje's dinner. Billie (Billimoria) and I were both happy indeed to find that Lady Bomanje was doing such a lot for our poor country. She was exceedingly popular with the English people.

At about half past ten at night as I and Billie were walking back to the R.A.F. officers mess; Billie touched me on the shoulder "Look there Sir, do you see what I see". I looked across the street. Music was coming out of what looked like a big dance hall and P/O's Subia and Z.H. Shah were walking away arm in arm with two most vivacious blondes. "My word" said I. "Our boys in uniform appear to be very popular with the blondes of Harrowgate".

Next morning I went and thanked the Commandant of Harrowgate before I left by train for London. This was most essential in order to leave a good impression with the R.A.F. instructors at Harrowgate who did not know anything about the Indian Air Force.

For twenty days Siddique and I were in London. One night we were really browned off with the rationed food. So Siddique said "Come on. I will take you to one of those special restaurants for as much food and roast chicken as you desire. But we shall have to pay". This restaurant was in Berkley street or just off Berkley street. The steps took us below the level of the ground. The place was full of Naval, army and air force officers and their wives and friends. It was under ground so far

as the level from the ground and Berkley Street was concerned otherwise it was a real Posh place full of officers of the defence services and their wives and friends. We ordered some clear soup, and roast chicken with fried potatoes and plenty of beans and vegetables. Also Christmas pudding came in due course and then some coffee. The bill came to fifteen shillings per head. This was not bad. Siddique paid the entire bill. This was really wonderful. I was under the impression that food was no good in London and people starved in London. This was far from correct. If you paid the price; you could almost get anything under the sun. I missed the chocolates etc. which during my days of cadet training at Cranwell; service in No. 16 Squadron Old Sarum Salisbury, or during the coronation were so much in abundance in the slot machines round every corner and at every railway station throughout England. Railway stations had no slot machines for chocolates now. Once I went to pull one but it was locked. Even the six pence could not go in.

I had heard such a lot about the bombing of London by the German Luft-waffe. I wandered all over London but did not see bombed out houses or buildings. Probably these were towards the East and towards the poorer quarters. The poor laways get it in the neck. In the West end there was no sign of misery or privation at all. People were quite cheerful and gay. Piccadilly, Regent street and Liecester square were full of men and women in uniform of the three defence services plus other auxiliary services like the home guards, fire watchers etc. etc. The tide of war had turned. We were in London for nearly twenty days. The Luft-Waffe could not drop a single bomb over London. The Germans were getting hell in their own homes. One evening just as the sun was setting I heard a roar of aircraft engines. I looked out of the western window of Hotel Splendid or the officer's hostel as it was called during war time. Four waves of American Fortresses were joining up in formation. At the rear came another three waves of Liberator bombers flown by the Royal Air Force. What a glorious sight. I wish I were leading one of those squadrons or a wing. Every air force pilot longs to see a glorious sight of a few hundred aircraft setting course together for the

territory of the enemy. Next morning I read in he papers and also heard on the B.B.C. news programme that 500 American and British four engined bombers had carried out a very successful night raid over Mannheim, Dusseldorf Cologne, and Berlin.

One day a note came from India office that we were to leave tomorrow for Prestwick in order to catch a transport aircraft for flight across the Atlantic. Siddique and I hurriedly packed up a small suitcase. We caught the afternoon train (LMS) from Kings cross railway station and reached Kilmornoch in very early hours of the morning. It was still dark. An R.A.F. transport coach picked us up at the railway station Kilmornoch. We reached Prestwick Aerodrome and had our breakfast in the terminal building. Lunch was also served but still there was no news about the departure of the R.A.F. transport Liberator. We were getting tired of sitting in the terminal building. Siddique and I came outside on to the beautiful turf of the golf course. There was bright sunshine and a very pleasant breeze was blowing. This was about the third week of July 1943. We wandered in the spacious lawns outside. There were some beautiful flowers in the garden.

Time passes very slowly when a person is waiting for transport. But in a very pleasant weather, tea time came so very quickly. Siddique and I sat down for a cup of tea in the restaurant of the terminal building. We were informed in a very hush hush manner to get ready for reporting to the traffic counter of the transport command. We were taken in a bus to the dispersal area where a black painted Liberator was ready. Our luggage was put on board, and soon we wereon board also. This was an R.A.F. Liberator converted for transport flying. There were no seats. There was a tremendous padding of felt and soft woolen rugs on the floor. We sat down on the soft woolen rugs. Our party consisted of a British Admiral, and an A.D.C.-Four British army officers, two civilian British personnel and two of us; Siddique and I.

The Liberator made a very easy take off from Prestwick aerodrome. Everything was hush hush. No one could ask the crews about the courses flown or the destination. German long range twin engined Condors

had been extremely active over the North Atlantic. Several transport planes of the R.A.F. had been shot down. We chose a very nice time about sunset. The large red disc of the setting sun could be easily seen on the western horizon. We passed over some ship building dockyards of Scotland. I looked through the port hole. Along the Coast line red houses were sprinkled for miles in beautiful green valleys of Scotland. Completed cruisers and destroyers could be seen in many dockyards. We sped towards the setting sun. Scenery of Scotland in the wild days of war impressed me very much indeed. Now we were over the sea; the Atlantic. Coastline had disappeared.

A Steward brought some hot tea and biscuits. Tea is so refreshing high up in the air. I looked through the port hole again. Crests of waves in the North Atlantic looked like tiny white specks. We must have climbed up to a fantastic altitude. It was getting colder and colder. All of us dug into heaps of blankets which lay all over the floor. Everyone had spread themselves out to a full length. Soft felt, plush and woolen blankets, and rugs were so comfortable. I had taken too much tea at Prestwick and also on board this aircraft. Just as everyone was going off to sleep in the soft drone of engines, I felt like going to the ship's toilet for a second. I opened the rear door towards the tail and entered the toilet. My word! It was cold! an icy wave and a shiver went down my spine. Every part of my anatomy was frozen. I ran back to the passengers cabin as fast as I could and closed the door behind me, without doing what I intended to do.

Passenger's cabin was either electrically heated or by hot gas from the exhaust of the engines. It was much warmer than that miserable toilet.

Everyone was fast asleep. British admiral was almost snoring. A Steward woke us up. Evening meal was served in a tray. This was a magnificant effort by R.A.F. transport command to provide hot meals over the North Atlantic. Colder altitudes make a person more hungry. I ate with the appetite of a pig. I looked outside the porthole and found the sun still in a setting position on the western horizon. I looked at my watch. Nearly four hours had passed since we left Prestwick

aerodrome. I told Siddique "Do you see what I see" and pointed towards the setting sun. "It is still there as it was at Prestwick, four hours ago. Where the devil are we going?". Siddique laughed. It suddenly dawned on me that we must be in the extreme Northern latitudes as the midnight sun was becoming more and more apparent in the month of July.

Four and a half hours had passed. We were almost approaching the end of the fifth hour when snow covered mountains appeared down below. Everything on the ground was covered in snow. "Where the devil are we? North Pole?" I asked Siddique. "God alone knows-do you?" was the reply. "I know it for certain that it is not my home town of D.I.K. in the North West Frontier of India". I told Siddique laughingly. By now a big aerodrome appeared down below. Our Liberator pilot throttled his engines down and was getting lower and lower, ready for a landing. I saw pucca blast pens with hundreds of P38 Lockheed Lightening, Air Cobra, Mustang, and Kitty Hawk fighters dispersed all over the air base. Apparently the American Air Force were in occupation of this land.

Some one had made a terrific snow ball just off the runway. The aircraft was parked. We came out in the middle of a snow blizzard and a howling gale. It was bitterly cold. In the terminal building at this late hour of the night there were still hundreds of American Air Force officers and men in uniform having some refreshments or a hot drink. I asked an American what place it was. He replied Rekjevik air base in Iceland.

I laughed as I told Siddique Chowdhry "I told you it was not my home town of D.I.K. in the North West".

Some refreshments were again served at Rekjevik. When we took off, the sun had set but there was sufficient light due to the fact that the sun never went far below the horizon throughout the few hours of the night before reappearing. Our Liberator set course along the South-eastern edge of Green Land. We flew for seven or eight hours, during which we slept comfortably. When dawn was breaking we landed at Montreal in Canada. The international airport was under fog so we landed at the military airport. After a shave and wash, we

went to the restaurant where two young Canadian women served good breakfast. Later we were taken to the International Airport of Montreal where the transport command arranged our seats in an American airlines DC3 Dakota aircraft bound for New York. A short stop was made at Albany before reaching La Guardia airfield New York. Again we had to change for Washington.

Throughout the flight, the Air Hostess was very strict in putting the curtains down so that none of the passengers could get a glimse of the big city of New York or Washington. Supper was served very early in the D.C.3 Dakota bound for Washington.

We had some refreshment at La Guardia airfield at about 4.30 P.M. We were not used to American habits. In India and England we were fond of our afternoon tea. We had to wait for one hour at La Gurdia. So, Siddique and I were dying for a cup of hot tea. I saw a girl behind a counter with boxes of chocolate biscuits and cold drinks. So Siddique and I turned up for a cup of hot tea. Siddique had a Lt. Commander's uniform and I of a Squadron Leader of the British Indian Air Force. I asked the girl at the counter "Hot cup of tea and some biscuits please". This typical English phraseology and the hot cup of tea was Greek to the American girl who knew nothing else but cookies and coca cola at 4 P.M. "Gee-where do you guys come from"? asked the sweetie "We do not have hot tea in the states, nor do I know what a biscuit is. But you can have plenty of cookies and coca cola if you so desire". We both blushed due to our ignorance of such a big country and then we laughed. "Anything to eat would do-miss" said I. Later Siddique and I got so used to cookies and coca cola at 4 P.M. for a period of six months in America, that when after an absence of six months, a hot cup of tea and biscuits were produced at the R.A.F. officers mess, Drigh Road, Karachi, I almost told the mess Khidmatgar "Please take it away and bring me some cookies and coca cola".

At Washington National Airport Captain Dalip Chowdhury A.D.C. to our Agent General Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai had come in his sports car to receive us. We were taken down to hotel 400 in one of the main

streets not very far from our offices of the Indian Agency General.

We had a quick bath and change. Dalip and Doctor Rehman took us for a cold drink at Hotel Statler which had just been completed. entertainment and dance was being conducted by the melodies of a dance band. I was amazed to see that there was no class distinction. A General, a soldier, a sailor and a Major sat at the same table and used the same dance floor. In all the first class hotels in London including the Savoy; N.C.O's and other British ranks were not permitted. A very funny story was told to me in London that a British Duchess was not permitted to see and ask her son to come into the Savoy hotel London for the mere reason that he was a Sergeant Pilot in the Royal Air Force. There was a terriffic commotion in the news papers etc. but the hotel management would not budge an inch. In Washington D.C. I saw with my own eyes on the evening of 25th July 1943; a few days later than the opening ceremony of this hotel; that a General, a soldier, a sailor and a major were standing in the same que for booking accommodation. A soldier was standing ahead of the general and he got his accommodation first. This was democracy!

We were introduced to Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai next morning. What a kind hearted old man ! He talked to me for fifteen minutes on Hindu Muslim unity and how well the two communities were living side by side in Lucknow and other cities of the U.P. We also met Creagh Coen who was the first Secretary; Hennessey the Press Attache and Doctor Rehman Deputy Press Attache. We also met Mr. Crane who was one of the staff and about ten American girls who typed and did all the office work. What a wonderful collection of people !

We were told a very funny story about Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai and a Washington Policeman. One day Sir Girja's eledest son who was studying in New York came to spend a week end with his parents in Washington. Sir Girja and his son left their car and the driver round the corner and commenced to walk a few paces to the Indian Agency General. When they were crossing the road; as bad luck would have it; a traffic red light came on. A Policeman shouted at them. "Come here you

two". Sir Girja followed by his son went up to the Policeman who was furious. Washington Policeman can be very nasty at times. "What is your name,". said the Policeman. Sir Girja replied "Baj Pai" "I don't care what pye you are" growled the Policeman. "If you go against a red light again-I shall make a mince pie out of you". This was enough for Sir Girja. He was a small gentle type of a fellow with not very good health. These words put Sir Girja into an unbearable anger, becaue his eldest son was along with him. He ground his teeth and raised his folded umbrella to hit the Policeman whose nerves gave way as he thought the man had gone mad and was going to hit him on the head. The Policeman bolted down the street and Sir Girja chased him upto a few blocks.

Almost everyone in the Indian Agency General asked us to dinner. Creag Coen asked us to his apartments, followed by Henessey and Rehman. Then Sir Girja asked us to dinner at his house. What a palatial house he was occupying. The monthly rent of the house was 2,000 dollars. Sir Girja maintained the prestige of princely India. There was a vast garden, a library, and a swimming pool in his house. Sir Girja threw several parties in his house in which many British and American diplomats were called. We were always asked to his parties. Lady Bajpai was also so very kind. Her two charming young daughters Bhagwati and Krishna had created such a good impression of India in the United States of America. A terrific writeup was given to their good looks and charming manners by many leading newspapers in Washington and New York.

I was extremely impressed by the City of Washington D.C. What beautiful white buildings and spacious lawns ! Roads aud avenues were so broad and clean. Trams, buses and taxis were so fast. Everyman in the street was so helpful and courteous. What a difference to those jitterbugging yank G.I's in Delhi and Karachi, who did no other work but wander around with dames picked up in the streets of these big towns in India. In Washington, at crack of dawn everyone smartly went to their jobs. Men and women alike walked briskly and kept their chins up. Everyone had the will and the confidence to win the war. Tremendous

amount of hard work was done throughout the week. On Saturday was a hard earned rest which everyone enjoyed. Holiday resorts were crowded with people. Hotels and dance halls were a gay meeting place for friends, and music floated in the air. I was really surprised. What a hard working, honest and polite race the Americans were ! No one was permitted to go about shouting "Yipee-Yipee-Yoohoo-Yoohoo" and trotting round and round the Cannaught Circus, like Yank GI's were doing at New Delhi, Karachi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. Colombo was probably the same. For a yank G. I, serving in India during the war time, it was most unusual if he did not place both hands round the buttocks of a skirted native girl firend and kiss her good morning in public with a thousand natives watching the proceedings in extreme surprise and a mental calculation that this was probably a normal Americancustom. The G.I's told all their native girl friends in India that it was a normal custom and a gesture of extreme politeness and courtesy in America if the man placed both hands round the buttocks of a dame during a social dance. And our stupid women believed in it. This act was Carried out in all the public dance halls and social gatherings in India.

The morals of the American citizens are as high as that of the English race. No demonstrative movements are permitted in public. No one was permitted to kiss and hug their girl friends in public in a demonstrative way. People had so many problems of their home and hearth that they never wasted a minute in the street. Honesty, good will, and hard work was being followed everywhere.

The biggest thing against the Americans is their colour prejudice. I was lucky to be in the British Indian blue Air Force uniform. Almost everyone from a street car driver to the owner of a high class hotel and senior army officers at the Pentagon showed respect and politeness. The uniform and a British Indian wing pinned on to my chest with two and a half stripes of a Squadron Leader carried me well wherever I went. In Hollywood at the end of my six months tour I could heva danced around with a film star if I had so desired. The American people, men and women threw their arms around me. Siddique and I had a soft corner in our

hearts for the negroes, but unifortunately their problem was so vast that we could not open our mouth in front of a white American. I was of the firm opinion that if Negroes could create an atmosphere of goodwill and friendship towards the White Americans and appeal to their sense of justice for a better treatment; much could be achieved as the white Americans essentialy were good people with a big heart.

Unfortunately within the first ten days of my arrival in Washington, a negro took away about twenty five dollars from the pocket of my bush shirt. I was getting into a bath. A negro butler brought my clothes after pressing and after leaving these on my bed took away twenty five dollars from the pocket of a bush shirt which was hanging in the almirah. This gave me a very bad impression about the American negroes. I could never shake off this impression during my six months stay in the States when I travelled across the length and breadth of the entire country. Subsequently I met some very good negroes of the working classes. Siddique and I, throughout our goodwill tour were exceedingly nice to the negroes but we never took part in the controversy between the white Americans and the negroe population. Once in New York, when we were having lunch with an American army Lieutenant and his wife; Siddique got into a hot argument with this young lady about the bad treatment given to negroes by the white Americans. I quickly chipped in Urdu language and persuaded Siddique to cut this topic out altogether as the Americans had strong views on racial segregation. We were on a goodwill mission for promoting good feelings between India and America. It was not proper for us to enter into a controversial subject with our hosts.

Within the first fortnight of our arrival in Washington we were asked by the American Foreign office and the Pentagon to give a short talk on the Indian armed forces, at the Lamb Club New York. We reached New York by train and stayed at the Barbazan Plaza hotel. Next evening we were the guests of the evening at a largely attended dinner given to about five hundred soldiers, sailors and Airmen of the American Defence services. A Czechoslovakian army officer was also a

guest of honour. At the conclusion of dinner our Czechoslovakian friend was the first man to be introduced on the microphone to the five hundred defence personnal of the American army, Navy and Air Force. He related a few episodes of the German conquest of Czechoslovakia and how he and a handful of troops escaped towards the allied territory. Then Siddique gave a brief description of the work of the Indian Navy and how well convoys were being escorted by ships of the Indian Navy through the red sea, the Persian gulf and the Indian Ocean. He also narrated an episode where a small Indian sloop was being hammered by a superior Japanese ship in the bay of Bengal. The Japanese ship was closing in fast. As she came within range of the 4" guns of the Indian sloop, a shell hit the Japanese ship athwartships. This made her go round once. She faltered and corrected herself and eventually gave up the chase. There were loud cheers from the G.I's.

Then came my turn. I must admit that it was quite nerve wrecking to face a party of 500 G.I's with a microphone and tell them all about a small organisation like that of the Indian Air Force with only ten squadrons. I picked up courage. A person becomes brave when faced by something difficult. My voice was firm. I was not sure whether the Americans would understand my English and an Indian accent. But apparently it was quite clear and understandable. I informed our friends the Americans that the Indian Air Force had expanded to 10 squadrons and was further likely to expand to 20 squadrons if the war continued. Our No. 1 Squadron had already won laurels in Burma against the Japanese. One Indian Squadron Commander had been awarded D.F.C. in the Burma theatre of operations. Our No. 2 Squadron at Imphal was achieving success and four additional squadrons, No. 3,4,6, and 7 were markingtime for proceeding to Arakan. This was very much appeciated and there was loud cheering.

Siddique and I shook hands after dinner as a sign of mutual complimentation, and proceeded to a small show which was arranged upstairs. At about 10.30 P.M. we walked across Broadway; beautifully lit up with flood lights. We had seen Broadway melodies in the movies only at Lahore during College life. Now

we were actually walking across Broadway. How wonderful ! One has to see Broadway at night in order to appeciate its lights and its beauty. We were informed that due to the recent appearance of a Japanese submarine near the New York harbour; authorities had cut down lighting of Broadway considerably. Even then there appeared to be more brilliance of lighting in Broadway than what I had seen in Piccadilly Circus, Regent Street, Liecester Square or in Champs Ellyse, during peace time. An American Lieutenant with us suggested that we should make an appearance at the Al-Morocco night Club. Our pay and allowances were not so good to go to Al-morroco night club where reservation of a table alone cost 20 dollars. Stage and floor show was supposed to be exquisite and the popsies of the floor show as well as those who frequented Almorroco at night were par excellence. Our finances did not permit us to enter Almorroco. We returned back to Barbazon Plaza hotel and went to bed.

Early in the morning when I was fast asleep, some one dropped a packet in the room. I got up and opened the small box to find that it was a complete breakfast. I had heard of this trick from Creagh Coen our First Secretary that breakfast drops in from Heaven at the Barbazon Plaza hotel. In my pyjamas I set about to locate a hole or a slit in the roof or in the walls and door but nothing could be located. This was a very fine way of dropping breakfast. This type of breakfast was a great blessing for those who wanted to sleep till late and avoid going to the dining hall at the proper time.

Next day we caught the afternoon Pennsylvania train for Washington. Pullman coaches were exceedingly comfortable. Railway terminal at New York was crowded with soldiers, sailors and airmen. In the main streets of New York and Washington almost every other man or woman was in uniform. How well the Americans were tackling the war !

Within ten days, Siddique and I made a return trip to New York along with Mr. Hennesey our Press adviser to Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai. We visited the British Information Service on the 20th floor of one of those hundred and twenty storied sky scrapers. We met Miss Harrington who had tremendous information about India. From her window we obtained a beautiful

glimpse of the New York harbour. The French battleship Richelieu looked a beautiful sight with its many turrets of 15" guns. A french battle cruiser also lay at anchor in the harbour. These ships were in the possession of the American Navy after the sinking of the French fleet by the Royal Air Force off the coast of West Africa. These ships had escaped the onslaght of the R.A.F. bombers off the West coast of Africa and had fled to America and surrendered to the American Navy. Here these ships were manned by personnel of the American Navy.

At the British information service, a short talk from both of us on the expansion and work of the Royal Indian Navy and the Royal Indian Air Force was recorded by the Columbia recording system and we returned back to Washington. It was still as hot and humid in Washington as at Karachi.

After a few days, a press conference was arranged by the Indian Agency General. In the evening, many of the American editors and sub-editors came to join us in a drink party. They talked to us for a long time. America had her eyes on an amphibious war in Burma. This open plan of the Pentagon was known to all newspaper editors in Washington. Over and over again in press conferences arranged by our Agency General in Washington and New York; the leading editors asked us "Is Amphibious warfare the only solution of driving out the Japanese from Burma"? This was a difficult question to answer.

Air and Naval Headquarters India had given us no open plans to discuss with news papermen in America. We had a feeling that Akyab was going to be the first assault place for our combined operations of Indian forces against the Japanese but it was very difficult to discuss war plans with newspapermen in America. Indian and British News papers had no clue to the nature of an immediate assault on the enemy in any particular theatre of operations. But American Newsmen always had a faint clue given to them by the Pentagon. I learnt about amphibious operations in Burma nearly ten months ahead of time from several editors of prominent news papers like Washington evening news or New York Times etc. At Delhi, Air Marshal Sir Richard Pearse gave us no clue at all. In a special lunch given

in our honour at the Imperial gymkhana New Delhi, Brigadier Jehu incharge of Press Information, even did not drop a hint about what to talk to the News men in America. We were warned by Major Rajendra Sinhjee who had just returned back from the United States, that Newsmen in America were extremely powerful and they demanded considerable amount of intelligent discussion on operations by the Indian forces in Burma. One could not avoid their questions.

American press is extremely powerful but some times their newsmen put such additional touches to the story that it becomes extremely embarrassing for a man to contradict the story. For example. After a visit to an American Air Force station Alpaso in Arizona, a newsman met me at Washington National Airport and asked me about what I saw. I informed him that at Alpaso I saw the latest version of P51 Mustang clipped wing fighter of the U.S.A.A.F. which in my estimation was slightly faster at lower altitudes than the British Spitfire XIV. Next day to my bewilderment I saw the following on the front page of Washington Evening News with my picture. "Indian Flying Major on a good will mission to the States says that a P51 will make rings round a British Spitfire XIV and this aircraft is the answer for the Japanese defeat in Burma" When the British Embassy looked at the front page news, they were very annoyed. Creagh Coen our First Secretary said that my statement to the press was not appreciated by any of the senior British officers of the Royal Air Force who were in Washington. At this time my old colleague from the R.A.F. College and Captain of the Cranwell Soccer team in 1930, Group Captain Hogan was Director of R.A.F. training in America. A very big flying training programme was being carried out at Eagles field near Williams field and at other American Military and air force training institutions.

American Press is very out spoken and Government has no censor policy imposed on them. Another example of how American press can add additional embarrassing bits to a story was told to me by a friend Mr. Gurdial Singh, a Director in the Civil Aviation Department, Government of India. During the British rule, Sir Fredrick Tymms Director General of Civil Aviation Government

of India and Mr. Gurdial Singh passed through New York in 1946 on their way to Montreal for attending a meeting of the Civil Aviation under the U.N. Organisation. Then Gurdial Singh was only a Regional Aerodrome Officer. Seeing Gurdial's beautiful beard and a silk turban, the press representatives thought that he was the D.G.C.A. India. So they talked to him for hours on the development of Civil Aviation in India. Gurdial informed them that war time aerodromes were being developed in order to cater for civil airlines which were increasing in Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta.

Next morning at the breakfast table when Sir Fredrick Tymms looked at the front page of the Morning News, he saw a picture of Mr. Gurdial Singh with the following write up.

"Mr. G. Singh Director General of Civil Aviation in India feels that freedom for India from the British will be achieved through Civil Aviation". Sir Fredrick almost went through the roof and was very annoyed with Gurdial Singh for giving a wrong press information. Gurdial pleaded that he never said anything of the kind.

So here is a word of advice for anyone who may visit America during the future years. If you love your job and your career in a Government Service, make no statements to the American press. Even if you say nothing something fantastic will appear.

I had shifted to a hotel but it was very expensive indeed. For dinner I used to go to the British Officers club. What a simple and good place it was! This place was full of British Officers of the army, Navy and Air Force. It was here that I met my old College friend Group Captain Hogan who was Director of R.A.F. training in America. He was exceedingly happy to see me. I met quite a number of other British friends and I made a few more friends in that club. Having been trained at the R.A.F. Cadet College Cranwell I felt like a brother towards these British Officers including Group Captain Hogan. Americans were like brothers also. They were exceedingly good to me.

In Washington also an international league and a club was in existance. Siddique and I became members of the club. On a Saturday afternoon the club had

arranged a picnic by boat down the Potamac river. What a wonderful evening in the paddle steamer reminiscent of the famous movie 'Show boat' which I saw in the college days in my first year at Government College Lahore in 1926. There was music and dance and refreshments of all types on board. Krishna and Bhagwati were also with us along with Dalip Chowdhry. There was a very cool breeze on the top deck. A movie was being shown. Millions of twinkling lights passed along each bank of the river Potamac. We went past the red lights of the National Airport and the adjoining military aerodrome. Civil and Military aeroplanes flew about in large numbers. These were either talking off or landing. What a dreamland we passed through in that show boat of Potamac river! How very friendly and kind the American people were. I shall never forget our trip in the Potamac river , and the 'Show Boat'.

Hotel bills were getting very expensive. Dr. Rehman asked me to come and live in his house. I was so comfortable and felt at home with the Rehman family. Mrs. Rehman was an exceedingly nice person. I spent quite a lot of time playing with their children Gogo, Zarina, and the elder boy. What a wonderful loveable family! They had a very nice house just off Wisconsin Avenue. I used to have my meals in a nearby restaurant.

Food in American restaurants was magnificent. There was a tremendous variety and abundance. At breakfast, lunch, or dinner one could choose from about twenty different menos. There was no shortage of porridge, cereals, puffed rice, sugar, cream, eggs, butter, marmalade, jam, honey, soups of ten different varieties, Beef, chicken, puddings, coffee, and lashings of ice cream, fresh fruit and iced glass of milk at each meal time. This was really wonderful! Within a few days I got used to the American system of food and meal times. A hot cup of tea and biscuits was discarded in favour of cookies and coca cola at half past four in the evening.

Use of taxis was very expensive in Washington. Either purchase of a car or use of tram cars, and omnibuses was considered advisable. Except Dalip who was on the permanent staff of the Indian Agency General, No one else could afford to keep a car for a short period.

Even British officers including Group Captain Hogan, used street cars (trams.), or buses as public transport. I soon got used to the system of a weekly or a monthly travel card which was valid by street car or bus anywhere throughout the length and breadth of Washington. I soon got used to the main streets like Massachusette, Wisconsin and other avenues. I came across nothing else but courtesy and good will from all residents of Washington. Some of the English men in India were a bit funny, and some of the American troops and GIs in India were also not well behaved. In their own country they are a wonderful race. Siddique was asked to give a talk on India at the girls college Washington. I asked him if he blushed in front of a few thousand young and pretty American girls and he said 'No'. It was such a thrill! Siddique was still a bachelor. On Saturday afternoon, Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai threw a terriffic party to the members of the International Club on the lawns of his house. It was a great success. Lashings of ice cream, cookies and coca cola were served. Dalip, Siddique and I helped Bhagwati and Krishna in entertaining the guests. Lady Bajpai also did such a lot in entertaining the guests. After the guests had gone, Lady Bajpai asked me to stay behind for dinner.

She was such a sweet and kind old lady! In their house I always felt, I was a member of their family. She never for a moment showed any distinction between a Hindu and a Muslim. She always worshipped her own country 'Bharat Mata' as a Godess. The old man never expressed his views on nationalism. He was a great diplomat, a very sincere and a true Indian of the old I.C.S. Category.

On number of occasions Lady Bajpai told me that in international meetings where flags of all nations and national Anthem of all nations is played, India draws a complete blank, and she used to sigh. I was moved by her sincere talk. What was our status in the free world? We were probably considered of the same status as a crown colony. But Britain had promised dominion status. We had no doubt that as a great nation she was going to keep her promise.

In New York we were invited by the American

Foriegn office through the kindness of the British Embassy to attend a dinner in which Mr. Wendell Wilkie, the second most powerful man next to James Roosvelt, was going to speak. It was a pleasure to attend this dinner along with a few of the British Information service men from New York. If I have not forgotten; this dinner was given at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, New York. Nearly five hundred guests attended. In American parties, anything below five hundred does not count and does not create a favourable impression. I was very much impressed by the capability of Mr. Wendell Wilkie. How well he spoke and how powerfully! On such occasions one cannot count the number of flashing cameras, press photographers trotting around in all directions and the number of microphones fixed in front of the speaker.

After dinner we went for some more coffee in another hotel. Here we were introduced to a certain Madrasi gentleman with a Hindu name. He was married to a European woman. He had written a book 'What Gandhi wants'. This book was distributed free (about 2 million copies) by a certain organization in New York. Doctor Rehman our Assistant Press Attache at the Agency General Washington had warned me against this man about a month ago. We had hardly said 'How do you' when the Madrasi gentleman abruptly broke into political discussion and openly began to abuse Mahatama Gandhi. This was too much for us. I cut his speech very quickly with the remarks "My friend; we two are Muslim officers in uniform but are Indian also. Mahatma Gandhi is almost a prophet to the Hindus and he is a great man for the Muslims of India also. We are in the uniform of the country and are supposed to uphold the respect and honour of our country. We are not permitted to discuss politics. We might as well close the subject". With this we got up and walked away. Siddique and I were really amazed at the man. I could never immagine that an Indian Hindu could use abusive language towards Mahatama Gandhi, in any part of the world.

Early in September Siddique was very quick in calling on the Headquarters of U.S. Navy in Washington. Within a flash he was away on a long tour with the American Navy on board a Cruiser. He was invited to

an actual cruise programe along the Eastern Coast of America. When he came in the office of Indian Agency General, he had a broad smile on his face What ho! Here Siddique my pal was away on an actual cruise with the American Naval Squadron where-as I was rotting in the office drinking Coca Cola. I had nicknamed Siddique as "Admiral". I said to him "What-Admiral-away on a cruise with the American Navy and here I shall be rotting in the office"? Siddique laughed and disappeared. I Went up to Creagh Coen our first Secretary and asked him to arrange my flying programme with the U.S.A.A.F. Dalip had already completed a month's training with a tank regiment. It was an ideal opportunity for me to get some training on kitty Hawk fighters or B25 twin engined Mitchell bombers. For nearly a week noting happened and then Creagh Coen came into my room with a smile. "Tomorrow you see Colonel Kenyon Chief of intelligence at the Pentagon", said Creagh Coen. I was surprised and replied "I want to meet the Chief of the American Air Force and not Chief of the Intelligence Department".

Next day promptly at 9.30 A.M. I reported at the Pentagon in a clean tunic, tie and slacks. I sent in a chit from the reception office inside the Pentagon and expressed the desire to see Colonel Kenyon Chief of Intelligence. Lieutenant Bitenbender of the Intelligence Department took me along and made me wait in a room. Within five minutes two Colonels, including Col. Kenyon, one Major and one lieutenant came along and parked themselves all round me. They made me feel quite at home. Then they started a series of questions, cross examination and a stiff interrogation. I felt as if I were a war prisoner or a suspected spy in uniform. The first question was "What is the mission of your visit to this country". This really cut the ground from underneath my feet. This question shocked me. I was under the impression that everything had been arranged between Delhi, London, Washington and that I would have a plain sailing in America. I must have expressed shock and surprise on my face. I gathered up courage and spoke in a firm and calm tone to my interrogators. "Sir, I am one of the two senior most officers of the India Air Force. I have been on war duties for a long time. I

was detailed by Air Marshal Sir Richard Pearse and the Foreign Office Government of India to proceed on a good will tour of America carrying the good wishes of the four hundred million Indian people to their American brothers and sisters and compliments of ten squadrons of the Indian Air Force to their mighty brothers the United States Army Air Force. I can assure you that I have not been primed by any one in Delhi or London to open my mouth on anything but a message of goodwill and comradeship to the American people".

This softened the tone of Intelligence experts at the Pentagon. Before I could conclude my answer to the first question, a second question was flung at me. "Is it true that there is extreme famine in Bengal and hundreds of villagers are dying every day". My answer was "It is true that there is a devastating famine in Bengal but Government is doing the best they can to tackle this problem. I have not been to the area of famine in Bengal; so I am not qualified in making any statements from a hearsay. Famine is definitely there-but on what scale; I could not say".

By now, a smile appeared on the faces of my American brothers. Colonel Kenyon was convinced that I was a genuine type of a fellow and not one of the bogus types who had drifted across the Atlantic to the United States of America. He shook me very warmly by the hand. "Come on pal, we shall have a coke in the restaurant. Then you will have to help our girls working in the Intelligence Department with some information on the North West Frontier of India".

Colonel Kenyon introduced me to a few other of his friends in the restaurant of the Pentagon. After a cold drink and a friendly chat, I returned back to Colonel Kenyon's Intelligence Department. Lieutenant Bittenbender introduced me to about half a dozen young girls at their tables. There was a section on the North West of India. They all got round me for interrogation on tribal warfare and the Fakir of Ipi. First of all I had to correct their proper pronunciation of the word 'Fakir'. The girls were saying it in a way which sounded like FAK-YER; which was very rude in a feminine party.

Colonel Kenyon and one of his assistants asked me "What chance do the poor tribesmen have against

aerial bombing?" My reply was "We never carry out any indiscriminate bombing of the tribal territory. Certain areas are proscribed in which no movement of any kind is permitted. Villages are not bombed. Aerial warfare is the only answer in Waziristan. Heavy casualities are inflicted on ground forces unless supported from the air. Scores of aeroplanes have been shot down by the tribesmen and hundreds of our and British troops have been killed over periods of years. Tribesman is a very naughty boy. He is not so innocent as he appears to you".

One of the cuties in uniform produced a chart of the North West Frontier. Every tribe was plotted up on this chart. Even the hills of Gorwekht where my squadron had carried out extensive bombing of the Fakir of Ipi's caves was plotted. How correctly they had plotted up the areas where the Mohmands, Dawar, Shinwari, Afridi, Wazir, and Mahsud clans lived. Areas of even the smaller subclans e.g. Tori Khel, Madda Khel, etc. were clearly marked. Uncle Sam was keeping no Intelligence Section on North West Frontier. Where did they get this information from? How properly did the cuties in uniform and civilian dress pronounce the names of the Pathan tribes and sub-clans. This was really wonderful! They asked me some questions on the bombing and tribal operations. I had to supply the answers to the best of my knowledge.

Colonel Kenyon was pleased with my interview. I was taken to a senior officer probably a Major General of the U.S.A.A.F., who shook hands with me and told me that full arrangements will be made for my tour of U.S.A.A.F. "Airfields are sprinkled all over the conntry-side. You shall have plenty of opportunity for passing your message of goodwill and comradeship from the people of India and the Indian Air Force." I was very happy with all of them and thanked Colonel Kenyon for his kindness before leaving the Pentagon.

Next day the orders came from Pentagon in a sealed cover. Creagh Coen talked to Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai who warned me to be very careful about what I said outside, because the American Press was uncontrolable. I said goodbye to Doctor and Mrs. Rehman and the children as I got into a Cab. (taxi) for Washington National Airport. I had a ticket for air travel from

Washington to Fortworth in Texas. I was to pick up further orders and detailed arrangements from Colonel Hoisington at the H.Q. of the training Command at Canadian and Pacific railway building, Fort Worth. I had only a travelling bag in which I had put in about half a dozen bush shirts, coats, collars, socks, vests etc. and a small leather brief case in which I carried my shaving kit, mirror, comb, brushes, hair oil etc. etc. and scores of photographs of the Indian air Force in training and operations. These photographs I had picked up from the public relations and publicity office at Air Head Quarters New Delhi. One of the photographs I still remember showed a P.T. class at the Service Flying training school Ambala. In this; Rippie Reporter and Jaswant Singh stood in the front rank in P.T. vests and shorts.

I obtained a ticket against the open voucher given by the Indian Agency General. Booking Officer of American Airlines objected to an open voucher. So he telephoned. Luckily Creagh Coen was available in his apartment and everything was smoothened out. The whole night I travelled by air. What a marvellous experience it was! All types of identification lights and beacons were sprinkled all over the countryside. I watched many of these lights and then fell asleep. Once or twice the aircraft landed at an intermediate airfield and a town but soon we were up again. At last in the dim light of dawn we landed at Fort Worth. I had carefully asked the Air Hostess repeatedly to wake me up when we got to Fort Worth. There was a very small terminal almost dead quiet at that time of the morning except the noise of a few joining passengers who got on board our DC3 Dakota aircraft.

In the dim light of the pre-dawn morning, I saw the shape of a huge stuffed bull with a colossal anatomy in the main hall. Who was the mad man responsible for putting up a dead bull of such size and proportions in an air terminal? I was informed by a porter and a cab driver that Texas was a rich cattle country. A bull was the emblem of a rich cattle country, and strength and might of a courageous people.

I informed the cabie outside that if a Texan was anything like our Pathan or a Sikh, then they were fully

justified in having what stood and portrayed in the air terminal.

At the Canadian and Pacific railway building I called at the reception office of the U.S.A.A.F. training Command which was located on the second or third floor. A good looking woman receptionist in a pair of glasses gave me a broad smile as she stood up to shake hands with me. "Major-we have been looking for you since yesterday. Colonel Hoisington would be so pleased to see you." She said and then dashed away through the corridor. A young Lieutenant Colonel appeared with a broad smile. He extended his right hand towards me. "Major Awan-my name is Hoisington. I am so very pleased to see you. We have received orders from the Pentagon Washington. All arrangements are complete. You are being picked up by an aircraft tomorrow morning". Saying this he took me to his room. Then he introduced me to the Major General Commanding the training Command in Texas. I had some coffee with them and then returned back to my hotel which was a small place on the outskirts of the town.

After lunch I was so tired that I fell fast asleep. It was the month of September but it was still very hot. In fact it was as hot as at Karachi or Bombay. When I got up from my slumber, I was very much refreshed. I wrote a letter to the First Secretary of our Agency General in Washington. I also wrote a letter to my wife in Peshawar. In the evening I had a bath. A woman representative of a local newspaper had come to see me. I went down and had a brief chat with her. She took down some notes and also took my photograph. She gave me a very good write up and also to the Indian Air Force in the issue of the next morning's paper. I could not avoid the press as it was my mission to communicate the good wishes of the people of India and the Indian Air Force to the American people.

In the evening I had a cold shower and was dressing up in my room. Down below there was nice music from the dining room. In nature's own garment except a silk dressing gown I peeped through the closed curtains to have a look at a few far off buildings and the setting sun. Down below, on the other side of the broad street I saw a party of five G. Is whistling to a batch of

young girls on the other side of the road. What a wonderful and sporting response! The girls stopped and smiled. Immediately the five G.I's went on to that side of the street. Without any formalities, each man picked up a girl and commenced to jitterbug to the nice tunes of the hotel orchestra. This amused me considerably to see how responsive American girls were.

Colonel Hoisington's deputy had promised to pick me up in his car for dinner. I had hardly dressed when he came in. We went to a Mexican restaurant and had a hot spicy food. It was very interesting to know that Mexican food was just as hot and spicy as our own Indian food. Bread prepared from Corn was most delicious with plenty of butter.

Next day in the afternoon an American Major of the U.S.A.A.F. picked me up in a staff car and took me to the aerodrome. Here a two seater Harvard or Texan trainer aircraft was ready. We put the travel bag in the rear and off we went. He informed me that our first airfield to visit was Randolph Field the West Point of the air. I found that the colour scheme of their aeronautical maps was different to the British system.

At Randolph Field I stayed at the officers mess. In the evening Major Seal their Public Relations Officer took me to a small town of St. Antonio at a little distance from Randolph Field. We had dinner in a popular hotel. There was a very nice programme of music, floor show and songs on the microphone. It was very interesting to note that on the dance floor every G.I. had a better looking Popsy than the officers. This was very much unlike the British Empire, where the officers had all the cream, jam and honey. The best Popsies always went about with officers. The poor troops were only kept busy at Football or Hockey.

In the Streets of St. Antonio, every child had the name of the hero Casey Vincent on their lips. Lt. Colonel Casey Vincent of the U.S.A.A.F. came from St. Antonio. He had shot down many Jap Zero's over Burma. Everyone enquired from me if I had met Colonel Casey Visy, in India or Burma. They also asked me if I had met any of the American volunteer group, the famous A.V.G, flying Toma Hawks, Kitty Hawks, and Buffalo fighter aircraft in Burma. These brave men had

undoubtedly played up hell with the Jap Zeros over Burma. I remember talking to F/O Arjan Singh and Raza of No. 1 Squadron (Lysanders)when they were evacuating from Rangoon before the onslaught of the Japanese infantry divisions. No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. (Lysanders) and the American A.V.G. or the Burma Tigers as they were popularly called were together and operated together from many airfields. Indian Lysanders used to bring the reconnaissance news of the arrival of Jap aircraft at a certain airfield in Burma. The A.V.G; Burma Tigers used to go and blow them up in the air or on the ground. No. 1 Squadron boys and the A.V.G. American pilots became great pals. Each A.V.G. pilot got a thousand dollars for each Jap. Zero shot down from the skies. Many of them had plotted up as many as 20 crosses on the side of their cockpit. This meant 20 zeros shot down.

Colonel Casey Vincent was on leave from India. But I did not get the chance of meeting him in his own home town of St. Antonio. Later when I was staying with the Officer Commanding the School of Navigation at Hando, I met Colonel Casey Vincent. He was very pleased to see me. We had tea together. He was quite a brave man but never spoke much about his own exploits and operations against the Japs. I was informed that he had pecialised in playing havoc on the Japanese infantry columns marching along roads and tracks in Burma.

Little kids in the streets of St. Antonio went about playing aerial machine gun fights with each other. They pointed the two fore-fingers at each other with thumbs up and immitated the noise and rattle of aerial machine guns. How very amusing !

At Rendolph Field I gave a short talk on the role of Indian Air Force in the South East Asian war against Japan. I gave a brief outline of the Indian defence forces and the victories already achieved in Somaliland, Eritrea, Abyssinia, Western desert, Tripolitania, Tunisia, Iran, Burma and Arakan. These words convinced the Americans that India was doing a very good job of work in the world war. Major Seal, Public Relations Officer published an account of my talk along with my picture in all the local news papers and bulletins at Randolph field and in St. Antonio.

At Randolph Field I watched a batch of forty instructors flying Texan trainers. Then I got a trip in a B25 Mitchell bomber in the co. pilot's seat. I was very much impressed by a speed of 220 M.P.H. by a medium bomber like a Mitchel. It had an exceedingly powerful turret with multi machine guns for the rear gunners. This aircraft was really the choice for the Indian Air Force and our operations in Burma. Four squadrons of Mitchell bombers would really have put the I.A.F. on the map of operations in Burma. In the air I handled the aircraft. It was amazingly manoeuvreable like a single engined bomber. At Randolph Field I was very happy to notice that the Americans believed in the principle of mass production; everywhere, whether it was in an aircraft factory or on a training field. A very large number of pilot officers was undergoing a course of instruction.

While waiting to see the Commanding Officer at Randolph Field in order to thank him and say goodbye before pushing off to Hando, school of Navigation, a white girl came to me and in a very brave manner told me "Have you done something for the poor negroes of this country. What a bad treatment they are receiving at the hands of the white man" She looked straight into my eyes with genuine appeal. I was helpless. I told her frankly; "My dear-I am on a good will mission to the people of America. I cannot open my mouth on controversial points. We have problems of our own. I am exceedingly sorry but I will not be able to utter a word or drop a hint of any kind on racial question". The poor girl's face dropped in disappointment. She must have thought I was a coward. But she was wrong. I was in uniform and I was not a politician to talk on racial problems etc.

After two to three days stay at Randolph Field the West Point of the air, I was flown to Hando the school of Navigation. Colonel Danny the Commanding officer of the training school took me to his house. Here I was introduced to Mrs. Danny and their small daughter. Mrs. Danny very kindly gave me a nice room located on the first floor. I forgot to mention an ineresting thing. When we joined the aircircuit at Hando-the pilot reported to the Control tower "I have a V.I.P.

(Very important person) on board". The Control tower replied "Please hold on till we get the guard of honour ready". This was a bit too much and I had to interfere in the radio telephonic conversation between the pilot and the control tower, with the remark "I am only a squadron Commander from the Air Force in India. I am not entitled to a guard of honour. Please do not bother".

Colonel Danny was an ex. West Point Cadet. He was exceedingly keen to talk to me about the life of a cadet at the R.A.F. College Cranwell. Then Mrs. Danny got some tea ready. The bell rang. The door opened and in walked Colonel Casey Vincent Winner of the American D.F.C. in Burma. He was very happy to talk to me about operations in Burma. We talked a lot about the A.V.G. and our Indian Lysander Squadron at Rangoon, Moulmein, Mandalay and Akyab etc.

I was taken round the school of navigation. There were literally thousands of navigators both officers and airmen (I mean GI's) under training. Advanced courses were using the latest types of telescopic bomb sights. Once the computed airspeed, height, and windspeed and terminal velocity of the bomb was set; it was an automatic compensating bomb sight. It was a piece of cake! The bomb aimer merely had to look through the sight and coincide the target with the central black dot and the cross wires. Press the tit and bomb is gone. In the synthetic training room a few very clever gadgets were being used. I was also taken to a dark room with a dome convered with stars. Model of the bomber aircraft was electrically switched on. Even the drone of synchronised four engines of a Liberator bomber was reproduced. I was asked to sit in the cockpit and fly the aircraft. What realistic conditions of flight in pitch darkness, and navigational calculations with the help of celestial bodies!

At Randolph Field I had seen a few very clever electrical synthetic training gadgets including a depressurisation chamber, an anti-ground looping device, and many more things which were being experimented by the Doctors in the school of aviation Science. De pressurisation was most interesting. Through small round glass cabin holes we watched the reactions on the mental alertness of flight crews as air was being pumped out

of the chamber thereby producing synthetic conditions of flight equivalent to an altitude of 15000 feet and more. There were peculiar expressions on the faces of flight crews when simple problems of arithmetic including simple additions and subtractions or division were given to them. Mistakes made by the flight crews were simply fantastic.

I was put in the ground looping dummy model of an aeroplane. I am glad I corrected all the violent movements of this dummy aeroplane as it violently swung to one side and then to the other without any warning, whatsoever.

One of the doctors of aviation Science at Randolph Field showed me an electronic gadget. It was switched on. Radiaton from a man's brain were recorded in the form of a steady graph. I was shown a graph of a certain American pilot Officer. The graph zig zagged and was disconnected at many places. The Doctor remarked "This is how we found that the man had epilepsy and a touch of madness in him inherited from the family". He was thrown out.

I asked the Doctor if he had invented an electronic gadget which could tell whether a man was a good man or a bad man. Because if he had such a gadget, then I was not prepared to stand in front of it. The Doctor laughed and said 'No-we do not have such a gadget so far, but one day we shall invent it'.

I found that the school of aviation science at Randolph Field had done a tremendous amount of progress. The only other nation who had such a school of aviation science were the Germans.

I was asked to talk to a class a navigators and pass my message of goodwill to them and to everyone at Hando. I did that quite well. Good publicity was given to my talk in the local news bulletins of Hando.

From Hando, another school, Euvalde was quite near. So a staff car took me to Euvalde. It had rained very heavily during the previous night. The storm; a line squall from the Gulf of Mexico was so terrific that all Amphibians and other planes from Corpus Christi and other stations came into Hando by the hundreds in trying to evade the fury of the storm, in which gale velocity had gone up to over 100 M.P.H. along the coast line. The car drive from Hando to Euvalde was

most pleasant. Hot weather had definitely gone. I was feeling a very pleasant and healthy shiver of cold in the back seat of the staff car. I had discarded my bush shirts at Hando and was wearing tunic and tie.

At Euvalde a very young Major was commanding the Field. I met his very charming wife. We had lunch and dinner together. Next morning I watched their elementary flying training programme. Fifty aircraft were started up at the same time, and all of these were controlled by radio telephony from the control tower, where I stood in amazement. At the R.A.F. Cadet college Cranwell, at Risalpur. or at the Services Training School Ambala, so much radio telephone control was not forced upon the poor cadets. They were taught to look around and concentrate on their own power of sight and vision in flying. If so much radio telephonic control was thrown on to our boys during their initial training; it was doubtful whether we could turn these boys into human pilots in place of electronic robots. But America was a very advanced and scientific country. They believed more in training their school boys into electronic robots than human pilots. Euvalde also covered my visit with a good write up in the school bulletins.

From Euvalde I flew to Del Rio on the Mexican border. This was a conversion school for pilots for the twin engined famous Martin Marauder medium night bomber. I stayed at the officer's mess. Accommodation at all air force stations was of an ordinary wartime hutment type with communal toilet rooms and bath rooms. Food was served in a big hall. Major Easley one of the instructors looked after me. The same afternoon there was a scooter race in the camp. I was asked by Major Easley to try my hand at the scooter race. I was warned that it was quite a dangerous game, more dangerous than the Roman Chariot racing in the days of Nero. I therefore refused very politely. Another senior Major instructor at Del Rio was married to a pretty girl whose forefathers were red Indians. I met them in the restaurant and we had some coke and cookies together. The girl asked me "Are you a charcoal Indian or a red Indian". I had a laugh and replied very quietly "My dear I am neither a charcoal Indian nor a red Indian. I am a real Indian from the shores of Bombay and

Karachi". She blushed and smiled. Americans can be a very very ignorant race. Their ideas of an 'Indian' are only mixed up with red Indian chiefs, and feathers and plumes.

In the evening this girl and her husband took me to a Mexican restaurant and bar right across tne border. I noticed a tremendous difference in the American side of a local bridge and the Mexican side of the bridge which was situated on the border. In Mexico one obtains a glimpse of the village life resembling our Punjab or the North West Frontier. Donkey carts can be seen all over the place along country tracks and main highways.

In the bar, they asked me to taste a little of the Mexican Takila but they warned me that it was a very very strong and potent drink. I therefore chose a coca cola. Mexicans with broad brimmed straw hats ln their native colourful attire played a guitar and sang spanish songs to the visitors. What a friendly atmosphere ! How simple and good the Mexicans were !

Next day was a Saturday. Major Easley introduced me to Colonel Mundy Officer Commanding of the school or station at Del Rio. "We shall see you tonight at the dance in the officers club". said Colonel Mundy. Then Major Easley took me for a trip in a Marauder. What a fine aircraft ! After take off and when at a comfortable altitude, he gave the controls over to me. How veryeasy to handle ! Major Easley feathered starboard engine and propeller. This aircraft was still exceedingly good and manoeuvreable with one engine. I made sure in the Co-pilots seat to make all the steep turns away from the dead engine. Next day Captain Yagel was killed in a Marauder while carrying out steep turns towards a dead engine in a practice flight with a pupil. I was told that Captain Yagal was a very good pilot. Marauders had their faults. These aircraft were very very fast indeed and were playing up hell in Germany and Tunisia etc; in fast day light and night raids over the enemy territory. These aircraft were so fast, that after a daylight attack on strongly defended targets they could outdistance enemy pursuit fighters. If I have not forgotten, these aircraft with a good bomb load and after carrying a good load of aircrews and air gunners used to cruise at about 260 M.P.H. which in those days was a fantastic speed for a propellor driven medium bomber.

Captain Yagel's death cancelled our proposed visit to a bull fight inside Mexico. On Saturday a dance was held. This was before Yagel's death. In the dance, Major Easley asked me to pick up any pretty woman for a dance. Easley must have seen many Hollywood movies in which a desert Arab's eyes pop out on seeing a few pretty white women. I had come from a country which had prettier women than what you see around air force training centres in Texas. I smiled and very politely informed Major Easley that I was quite happy even without rushing in for pretty popsies. I was on a diplomatic mission and could not go about rushing in like a mad man wherever I saw a smile and a pretty face. First person I asked for a dance was Mrs. Mundy, wife of the old Colonel Commanding Air Force Station Del Rio. Mrs. Mundy was about fifty years of age but she was an exceedingly charming and sweet person. During the interval We ordered some cold drinks. A young American Lieutenant joined our group. I was unaware that as a joke, Major Easley had purposely asked this young Lieutenant to swing a fast story of an American double talk. I had no idea of what an American double talk was. This young Lieutenant became very friendly and within a few minutes told me a story of how he shot down a Jap Zero over Okinawa island. I had not doubted his shooting of a Jap Zero in one second. Then he went on about how a flock of thirty Jap Zero's fell upon him and he commenced to shoot them down one by one. Then a portion of his wings was shot away. His tail became sluggish and he found that a big portion was missing. Then his propellor was shot away, but he still flew on. At this point I could not help laughting but everyone else kept a serious face as prearranged. Here Major Easley smiled and said "Now you know what an American double talk is" and everyone laughed instantaneously.

At Del Rio, Colonel Mundy had very kindly agreed to my flying in a Martin Marauder aircraft to Harlingen, the school of air gunnery. I left with a young Lieutenant for Harlingen. After take off the aircraft was handed over to me and I flew it to Harlingen. At Harlingen Major Zohler Chief Gunner Instructor introducedme to the Colonel Commanding the school. I was given a room near the officers mess to stay in. Residential accommodation

at all the training fields including Randalph Field, West Point of the air was of a hutment type not comparable with R.A.F. College, Cranwell and the residential bungalow accommodation for officers at R.A.F. Stations Peshawar, Kohat, Drigh Road or I.A.F. Station Ambala. Here thousand of officers and cadets were under instruction.

I was taken round the synthetic shooting gadgets as well as the actual skeet shooting ranges. Then Major Zohler took me in a twin engined trainer and showed me where the actual firing from the air was carried out. It was most interesting to see the American Mass production methods. Thousands of air gunners fired on scores of targets. I tried my hand at Skeet shooting and the synthetic machine gun in a dark room. I was very pleased to get 78% pass, in the first attempt. This showed to the Americans that Indian Air Force officers could also shoot straight.

At Harlingen many publicity photographs and my message of good will from the people of India and the Indian Air Force was taken and published in the Field's daily News bulletin. I was introduced to Lieutenant Kroening of the transport command. A Texan trainer was placed at our disposal. I said good bye to Major Zohler and the officer Commanding Harlingen and left for Tarrant Field which was a training and conversion school for B24 Liberator four engined bombers.

At Tarrant Field I met Major Schwizer, Chief Instructor at the Air Field. At this airfield I saw a negro squadron on parade but I was quietly asked to come away for lunch. Major Schwizer showed me round the school. We took some publicity photographs near the B24 engines and in the workshops and instructional rooms. Major Schwizer was one of the most polite fellows I ever met at an American Airfield. Like Major Easley, Major Zohler and Colonel Hoisington he was keen at every footstep to help me convey the message of goodwill and brotherhood from India. I had an intention of getting a trip in a B24 Liberator during a night long range formation and navigational exercise. But the school engagements and short talk on India and the Indian Air Force kept me away from the night flying.

Lieutenant Kroening was a great help. He was

such a good companion in flight or during visit to a training field. I soon got used to the American sense of humour and jokes. Kroening was full of wit and humour. I missed the boys under training as their programme generally started at night. Liberator or B24 was essentially a Night Bomber aircraft and all connected and relevent training was for night flying. That night, flying programme went on throughout the night but I was so tired that it did not distrub me much. Major Schwizer showed me the latest version of a bigger B24 Liberator which was being turned out by the factory at Tarrant Field. It was nearly twice or three times the size of a B24 Liberator but looked very much like the Liberator. This aircraft was being produced later for mass production purposes with a view to carrying out long range raids over Germany, Italy and Japan.

After a two day stop at Tarrant Field, Lt. Kroening and I took off for Williams Field which was the home for training on the famous P38 Lockheed Lightening fighter aircraft. We had a fairly long trip from Tarrant Field to Williams Field. The countryside was more like our province of Sind and Baluchistan; Major portion being a desert with traces of hills here and there. After seeing the Adjutant, I was taken in straight to see the Lieutenant Colonel Commanding the Field. I found him to be a very pleasant type of a fellow. He had a broad smile on his face. His hand shake was very warm and cordial. He smiled and said "Major-everything at this airfield is yours. But do not pinch one of my pretty Wacs". I smilingly replied "You can depend upon me, Sir. I shall only admire your WACS from a distance". I later found out that Williams Field had the prettiest collection of WACS that I ever saw at any American airfield. They had a very big hostel almost opposite to the senior Officer's Mess. At about sunset one could easily see WACS dressing in their rooms. And these were the biggest show off in the United States of America. When dressing up after a bath in the evening, they made it a point to open up all the glass windows of their dormitories, when putting on under-clothing and stockings. This was most tentalizing to the poor fighter boys under training when passing on the road underneath the girls dormitories. Kroening and I had gone out for a walk.

When we returned back to the officers mess we were unknowingly passing below the Wac's, dormitory; and saw some beautifully tentalizing figures. Being on a diplomatic mission I did not intend to create an impression for Lieutenant Kroening that I was purposely slowing down my walk in the gathering darkness of evening, underneath the girls dormitory in order to catch a more lingering glimpse of those beautiful figures. Kroening insisted on stopping underneath a lighted window where one WAC was adjusting her brassaire and the second pretty one was putting on her petticoat. "Look here old boy', said I "This place is probably out of bounds for officers and men. We are near the wrong place. Let us buzz off".

That evening there was a big guest night. Several British officers who had come to watch the passing out parade of the British boys from Eagles Field were also invited. I met Group Captain Hogan, Director of R.A.F. training in the United States. He was very happy to see me. We talked about the R.A.F. college Cranwell and our cadet days during 1930. Hogan was the Under Officer of B Squadron at Cranwell in 1930. Amarjit and Bhupinder Singh my collegues were both in B Squadron. Group Captain Hogan enquired about Amarjit and Bhupinder and was very sorry to learn from me that both were killed in a crash in India in August 1933.

After dinner, speeches were delivered. Nearly four hundred officers attended the dinner that evening. After the speeches when coffee was being served a young negro boy entertained us with tap dancing with the accompaniment of hot music. There was a terrific applause.

Next morning a young instructor asked me to accompany him in a P38 fighter aircraft. P38 Lightening fighter with a twin sleek fuselage was a single seater fighter but some of these had a piggy back arrangement in which a second man could be taken up in a lying down to a stretched up position just behind the pilot's shoulders. It was quite a job to get me into such a position. The young Major had to show me the exact position before I could copy him. We took off with the greatest of ease and climbed to a very high altitude. At about 6,000 feet he asked me "Do you feel the angle

of climb". I replied 'NO'. It was very comfortable indeed and the angle of climb could not be felt. "Please look back" said my friend. When I looked back behind my shoulders through the glass canopy; the aircraft was literally standing up on her tail. "By Jove" I exclaimed "She is standing up on her tail and still climbing". "Yes" was the reply. "This is one of the outstanding characteristics of the P38 Lightening pursuit ship. This is how we are winning practically all the aerial combats against the Japanese. We are teaching our boys to ask and induce a Jap Zero for fight at an equal altitude. As the Zero is engaged at an equal altitude; P38 pilot opens the throttles fully and climbs up vertically to a height of about 2,000 feet above the Zero. Then the P38 pounces on the Zero". This was really wonderful. Months past when at a later date I was in Arakan against the Japs in a dive bomber squadron; a lonely P38 used to pass over our air strip heading for Chittagong after beating up the Japs at Akyab. I used to think of my visit to Williams Field and my flight in a Piggy back P38 Lightening aircraft. I thought of all those dear friends I had met at Williams Field. I had one more trip to Al-Paso with Lieutenant Kroening before I pushed off to Luke Field with Lieutenant Colonel Slayden. At Al-Paso I saw four squadrons of naval Wild Cats in transit. We were held up for half an hour in order to permit these four squadrons of Wild Cats to land. For the first time I saw the clipped Wing Mustang P51 fighter. We were waiting near the runway when the tower at Al-Paso came up on radio telephony "Army P51 36702- You are clear and number one to go". The pilot took off. What speed! He disappeared behind the rock of Al-Paso before I could say 'Jack Robin' to myself. Later at Washington when I gave a press interview to a reporter from Washington Evening News, I mentioned the fact that I had seen the performance of a Mustang P51 fighter which at a lower altitude was faster than the British Spitfire XIV. This made me unpopular among a number of my friends from Britain. The press reporters are terrible in America. It was reported "An Indian flying Major says; P51 will make rings round a British Spitfire XIV". My very simple and well intended statement was twisted in the same way

as Mr. Gurdial Singh's statement in 1946 in New York was wrongly twisted into "India will achieve her independence through Civil Aviation". This statement in a morning paper sent Sir Fredrick Tymms D.G.C.A. India through the roof.

I was very much impressed with the efficiency of P38 training at Williams Field. After flying, I stood in the control tower for about an hour and watched young lieutenants carry out their flying training. After three days stay, Colonel Slayden and I took off for Luke Field. I was also very sorry to say goodbye to Lieutenant Kroening. He and I flew through hundreds of miles in Texas and Arizona. While in Texas we had learnt the joke that if anyone asks you about the capital of United States-Always reply 'Austin' and not Washington. Now we were out of Texas; therefore had to say 'Washington'.

At William's Field I watched the graduation and passing out parade of the American pilots as well as British boys from Eagles Field. Group Captain Hogan, a few senior British officers and I stood behind the officer commanding Williams Field during the March past. First came the American P38 boys past the saluting base which had the stars and stripes and the Union Jack fluttering side by side in the morning breeze. Then came the British boys from Eagles Field. Last of all was a party of about four hundred Wacs. There was a tremendous cheering from the crowd of spectators as the pretty Wacs marched past with their flag and banner. Williams Field was probably a stronghold of the Wacs. I had never seen so many pretty Wacs even in Washington as at Williams Field. We took some pbotographs of the officers of the British Empire, together. This was a very good souvenir, as we never knew when we shall be together again.

At Luke Field, the Colonel Commanding the Field was not such a jolly fellow and the type of a person as at other airfields. One can always find out a grounded pilot or an old war horse no longer fit for active service. He commenced to cross examine me on the types of aircraft I had flown and where I had received my wings etc. I was very polite in replying. Even Lieutenant Colonel Slayden was not happy about the behaviour of his Officer Commanding towards me. However, I fully

appreciated that one could never expect cream, Jam and honey wherever a person went. A big country like America or any other country always had a few indifferent and impolite types of senior officers who got to exalted ranks of a Colonel and O.C. of a training field more by wire pulling at the Pentagon rather than by virtue and merit. What a difference between the Politeness and of those talented officers Commanding I had met at Randolph Field, Hando, Euvalde, Harlingen, Tarrant Field and Williams Field and this liverish type of a fellow who was the Officer Commanding at Luke Field. I was not disappointed at all becauce being in the air Force I knew fully well that one has to meet a liverish type of a fellow sometimes. This is very true, whether it is in England, America, or India. If a few liverish types were non existent in the air force of the world, then there would be no appreciation for the good types.

Before I had reached Williams Field, Wing Commander Donaldson, a British fighter ace had visited that field. He broke all the regulations of the Field and rolled a fighter aircraft at about a hundred feet from the ground. The airtraffic Controller told Donaldson "Young man you are grounded". "Am I?" was the answer. Immediately after take off, Donaldson carried out four rolls in a row straight off the ground; blew a raspberry at the airfield and pushed off. The Colonel commanding Williams Field roared with laughter when the Chief Air Traffic Controller reported the matter to him. Later he told me "Have you met that guy Donaldson of the British Air Force. Gee he is a swell guy! Nothing can keep him on the ground and away from aerobatics". Then the Colonel roared with laughter. Other American fighter boys were very annoyed as they were not permitted to roll at two hundred feet off the ground.

I had the pleasure of Colonel Slayden's company at Luke Field. He was an exceedingly pleasant type of a fellow and looked after me very well indeed. In the evening we motored down to Phoenix where the Public Relations Directorate and the Foreign office had arranged a reception in a selected hotel. I saw a very large number of Chinese nationals, both men and women. After flying about over the deserts of Texas and Arizona,

a fruit cocktail tasted so delicious and the string music from the Orchestra of the hotel sounded so heavenly.

Once again we set our course in the faithful Texan for Santa Ana, Head Quarters of the Western training Command. At an intermediary airfield we obtained weather forecast and some petrol and oil. Here for the first time I saw a B24 Liberator fitted up with a peculiar type of antenae etc. and an electronic gadget on board which could detect the presence of a submarine within the radius of a hundred miles. This was still a hush hush electronic gadget. Had I shown keeness to see the gadget; they would certainly have been too pleased to show it to me, but I never poked my nose into hush hush gadgets knowing fully well that I was on a diplomatic mission.

At Santa Ana I was introduced to Major General Cousins who was Commanding the Western Command. He was exceedingly nice to me and asked me all about the Indian Air Force and the Indian People. I gave a short talk to the officers and cadets under training at a nearby training school. Major General Cousins looked very fit and young. He smiled and jokingly asked me "Are you fond of fishing Major". I did not get the deeper meaning of the word 'fishing'. Seeing me looking a bit lost he provided the clue himself-"What I meant was human fishing. I intend to send you to Hollywood for ten days. It is a swell place for fishing. There is an officer's boarding house which was once owned by Charlie Chaplain's father. This house has been converted into an officers rest and recreation mansion or hostel. Ten days living just off the Highland Boulevard will do you a world of good. The places nearby, I mean restaurants and night clubs are full of movie stars and starlets and extras. Pick and choose! It is a good place for fishing". Then he laughed as he shook hands with me and bade me goodbye.

I was very sorry to say goodbye to Lieutenant Colonel Slayden who flew me from Williams Field upto Santa Ana. At Luke Field he helped me to address the biggest gathering of cadets and officers. He was responsible for giving tremendous publicity to my visit. This enabled me to communicate a message of good will from the Indian Air Force and the four hundred million people

of India to the people of the United States. My photograph and a very good write up for the Indian Air Force appeared in many news papers throughout the length and breadth of America and particularly in Texas and Arizona. The publicity can be well judged when practically six months later I was passing through Murree near Rawalpindi; an American G.I. tapped me on the shoulder and said "Major-my releations sent me some cuttings from American newspapers. You did a very good job of publicity for India and the Indian Air Force when touring the States". I was very happy to know that.

A, U.S.A.A.F. officer accompanied me upto Hollywood, and arranged to book a room for me in the Officers guest House, situated on Highland Boulevard. Then we drove down in an Air Force staff car along a beautiful palm avenue to the town of Log Angeles and had our lunch in a nice restaurant. Here I was very much infatuated with the good looks and good dresses of women. Many of these women were starlets or extras in the Hollywood film industry.

After lunch and after listening to some good music and seeing some real pretty Popsies, the American Air Force Officer left me at the officers club. I said Good bye to him and expressed my extreme gratitude for the kindness shown to me by the American Air Force. All this was arranged by the courtesy of the Pentagon in Washington and by Lieutenant Colonel Hoisington of the training command at Fort Worth, Texas. I was tired and at the same time so happy to know that my mission on which I had flown thousands of miles over the to territory of the Middle East, Mediterranean, and North Atlantic which was infested with long range fighters of Germany and Italy; had been successfully completed. I was told to give a message of good will and comradeship to the American Air Force and the American people. Never in the History of India had a military aviator flown thousands of miles through enemy infested territory to deliver a message of friendship and hope of victory to the great American nation. I looked at myself in the mirror as a lean thin insignificant type of a man. But I was most grateful to God and the American people for making my mission a success. When I left the shores of India I never had a

chnace of addressing thousands of cadets and officers on parade. Maximum opportunity I had was probably in the form of a few farewell speeches in the officers messes of the Royal Air Force in India. It is true that I led a squadron of the Indian Air Force in combat and I also commanded a squadron of men on a parade ground; but speaking to about a thousand American officers and cadets at every training field was quite a difficult task. In the beginning it appeared amazingly difficult to face so many people of a different race. But after one or two talks at a few airfields, I felt as if I had been doing this type of work for years. I never felt so happy until I was facing about a thousand to two thousand officers and cadets of the American Air Force.

I was tired. The success of my mission made me close my eyes. I lay on the bed in my shoes and uniform. The entire visit from the evening that I caught American airlines night service to Fort Worth right upto the time that I said goodbye to General Cousins at Santa Ana, flashed back though my mind as a movie picture. I fell asleep in the humid afternoon heat of Hollywood.

When I woke up it was about 4 P.M; time to have a coke and some cookies. I had a quick wash and went down stairs through the beautiful garden of the rest house to a nearby restaurant. All restaurants along Highland Boulevard or sunset Boulevard are always full of pretty film stars, starlets and extras. My friend from the American air force had advised me not to get mixed up with stars and starlets in the night clubs of Hollywood. One round of drinks is more than enough to sink a poor air force officer of any country. I made it a point to keep out of night clubs of Hollywood, inspite of the fact that there was a great temptation. My allowances of twenty three dollars per day were not enough to entertain any Popsies of any description. Playing about with popsies in America is a very hazarduous task. It reminded me of a Persian verses:-

شیر مردان بلاکش پادریں غوغا نہند

"Only the bravest can embark an such a Campaign" and then there is a tremendous difference between Popsies of Washington, London, and Delhi on one side and those

of Hollywood on the other. The visit of our Maharajas had created a bad precedent. In every night club of Hollywood, unless you throw in dollars without counting them, you are considered to be a man of no calibre.

I saw a young Canadian Squadron Leader in a blue R.A.F. uniform, beating it up in a two seater sports car up and down the Sunset and Highland Boulevards. In one restaurant he looked at my Khaki British Indian uniform with the same badges of rank, but I possessd better decorations then he did. I could notice that he had been beating it up. He had dark circles round his eyes. Probably, too many Popsies and drinks had done all that to him. Those days, if a young air force officer went about in blue uniform and posed as a battle of Britain boy; he could easily get a date from a film star of any Calibre.

From the officers rest house, lights of Hollywood and Los Angeles looked beautiful. Next day I wrote an air mail letter to Creagh Coen our First Secretary in the Indian Agency General Washington. I informed him that I had completed a most successful tour with the United States army Air Force and was now marking time at Hollywood for the return air trip to Washington.

Next day I set about to collect some souvenirs of Hollywood. I walked upto the Max Factor manufacturing-Stores. I asked a pretty woman dressed up as a painted doll; if I could have a few Max Factor lip sticks, and rouge etc. for taking to India. This woman replied "Max Factor lipisticks are rationed because due to war there is a scarcity of material and there is a tremendous overseas demand for thousands of Wacs, WAAFS, WRENS, ATS and all other S'S of the female sex who are serving in uniform across the seven seas. I can give you only two lipisticks and those also not in metal cases". I shook my head "My dear-I have to take these lipisticks all the way to India, by air. What is the use of taking two only and those also not in metal cases" was my reply. This amused the woman and she said "If you wait here for a minute, I shall bring our Manager down." She disappeared up the staircase and within a minute a very jovial type of a man with tortoise shell glasses came down. "There is a war on" said the Manager "But since you happen to be on a good will mission from India;

I will let you have fifty of the finest Max Factor lip sticks in gold metal cases and about two dozen rouge containers and powder boxes etc. You can pay at the counter". I collected and paid for those items. This was really a good collection of souvenirs from Hollywood. All the film stars collected their lip sticks and powder boxes from this shop. These things had not been in India since September 1939, from the date of outbreak of the war. These lip sticks were not readily available even in Washington. I could have got a date from any young woman in Washington by giving her a Max Factor lipstick procured from the Movie's own homeland in Hollywood. When I returned back to Peshawar after two months, there was a real scramble for these lipsticks. I presented one each to many of the I.A.F. wives.

I collected many more items of ladies clothing and under clothing in Hollywood. America is a wonder land for shopping. Everything under the sun is available at a reasonable price. Shop windows are full of beautiful items of clothing for men and women. Money becomes the limiting factor otherwise a man could spend days in Hollywood, Washington, and New York in shopping.

I required a hair cut and walked into a Gent's hair dressing salon on Highland Boulevard. The gentleman in the Salon made a very quick and correct guess at my nationality "I suppose you are from India Sir? Mr. Ezre Mir comes here quite often. Do you know Mr. Ezra Mir in the Movies". I have heard of Ezra Mir "was my reply "But I have never met him". The barber took great pains in trimming my hair. After he finished with me and after a few final touches of squirting scented hair tonics and lotions was completed, I felt more like a film star going to the Metro Goldwyn Meyers Studio than a poor Squadron Leader of the Indian Air Force.

A few young women used to come to the Officer's guest house for doing voluntary work in making up the beds and tidying up the place etc. These young women were doing a magnificient job of work. They even cut flowers from the garden and arranged these in the drawing room and the writing room etc. I was always full of praise for the English women when I saw them doing voluntary work in the hotel Splendid (Officers Rest House

and Hostel) in London, and the Amercan women at Officers Rest house in Hollywood. There were a thousand and one other voluntary jobs which were being done by these brave young women. In India also our ladies did a lot for war work. My wife used to go regularly to the knitting parties arranged by the senior lady of the Royal Air Force at a particular Air Force station or at Air Head Quarters Simla and Delhi. I knew it for a fact that more coffee was drunk in the Air Force Wive's Knitting parties then the number of gloves or stockings produced for airmen of the Royal, Air Force and the Indian Air Force. But still-these wive's knitting parties were a great incentive to every air force officer and airman for winning the war decisively and in the shortest period of time. On number of occasions, my wife produced a bill for forty rupees for the station's kniting party and the amount of coffee drunk by the wives. I laughed and told my wife, that it was cheaper to buy a dozen woolen stockings and gloves for the airmen in the bazar rather than spend forty rupees on a knitting party and gallons of coffee drunk by the wives, when the net result was half a pair of stockings and one pair of mittens produced in the course of a whole morning. But still; we believed that war was won by the spirit of the people and not by the weighing up of heavy armaments etc.

A very nice looking American woman became very friendly with me and used to stare straight into my eyes. I was miles away from home and longed for the company of my wife, On a hot summer's afternoon, this woman and I were climbing up the steps of the officers rest house in Hollywood, together. She had a pretty tight fitting cotton dress which plainly showed the contours of a firm bosom. She looked at me. I put my arms round her and pulled her towards me. She did not resist. I was almost being carried away by emotion. But it suddenly dawned on me that she was engaged to an American boy in the U.S.A.A.F, who was proceeding on active duty to the Pacific Zone. I immediately removed my hand from her waist. Women are spoiled by men, otherwise they are more full of virtue than the man.

After a stay of seven days in Hollywood, I received a letter from our First Secretary Creagh Coen in Washington. The letter was exceedingly polite and nice. He

informed me that arrangements had been made with the American Air Lines at the Los Angeles airport. Production of the attached letter of Authority from the Indian Agency General would enable me to obtain an air travel ticket and get on board an aircraft bound for Washington D.C. I immediately took a cab and reached the airport in Los Angeles. Within an hour a D.C.3 Dakota aircraft left for Washington.

Journey from Los Angeles to Washington nearly took 16-17 hours by a twin engened D.C.3 Dakota aircraft I left Los Angles airport at 3.30 P.M. and reached Washington National at 10.30 A.M, next day via Phoenix, Dallas, and Fort Worth. Besides these three major stops; we made about half a dozen other smaller stops for purposes of refuelling and picking up passengers. My journey was made very comfortable by a prety and smart air hostess who had been reading an account of my mission with the U.S.A.A.F, through the local newspapers. There was not a single moment when she did not bring me something to eat or drink. A fat jewish army Sergeant sitting next to me remarked "It is lucky Major that I am sitting next to you. When the pretty air hostess brings you something to eat or drink, I get a share also" and then he laughed. This young blonde air hostess was engaged to a boy in the U.S.A.A.F. in India. She asked me if I had met her boy friend in India in the American Air Force with that name. But locating her boy friend in India was a very big problem as there were thousands of American Officers and men in Karachi, Bombay, Madras, Delhi and Calcutta. She was very sorry to say that her boy friend would be so very lonely in India where women observed purdah. I assured her that her boy friend would not be lonely at all, as American Officers and G. Is found more dames in Delhi, Karachi and Calcutta than what they could get across the Atlantic in the American continent. She was very much amused and laughed. At Fort Worth she went off duty but she handed me over to the next brunette that came on duty.

At washington national airport a press reporter and photographer took my photograph when coming out of the plane. I gave a short interview and admired the hospitality of U.S.A.A.F, and some of the latest types of

aircraft which were being used. I mentioned that the Clipped Wing Mustang P51 fighter, in my opinion was faster at lower altitudes than the Spit XIV. Next day or rather the same evening my picture appeared on the front page of Washington evening news with the following news "Indian Flying Major says that a P51 will make rings round a British Spitfire XIV". This made me a little unpopular with my British brother Officers who were in Washington. Even our first Secretary Mr. Creagh Coen looked a little unhappy. It was not my fault, if the news men distorted the phraseoloy of my statement. I had always spoken well of everything that was relevant to the British Commonwealth and its fighting forces. All the news paper cutings I had gathered and sent to the 1st Secretary showed how well I had praised the fighting forces of our Commenwealth and particularly India.

This was the month of November 1943. When I left Washington in the end of September, it was still warm. Now after a period of one month there had been a complete change of weather. It was bitterly cold and the howling wind almost pierced through, a man. I was very glad that I had brought my Air Force blue great coat with me. In the evening I could not go out for dinner without the great coat. I was staying with Dr. Rehman's family just off Wisconsin Avenue. I had a most comfortable suite of rooms on the first floor. The whole house was centrally heated. Hot bath was available in the evening and also till ten in the morning.

Next Saturday the international club held a dance at a place which had been loaned to the club by a rich woman. This place was just off Massachusette Avenue. The place was full of young and pretty women of all nationalities and handsome men from the four corners of the world. In my absence, Captain Dalip Chowdhry had returned back to India. He was dying to go back to his regiment which was somewhere in the Western Desert. Siddique Chowdhry and I also longed to get back to our respective units which were on active duties. Diplomatic duties are wonderful but a time comes when a person wants to get back to ones own active unit. We had an exceedingly good time in America. The American people had put their arms round us. We loved their

hospitality. They were exceedingly nice to us. But time had come to return home. Dalip was replaced by Captain Altaf Qadir.

I had been a substantive Squadron Leader since 1941. Many squadrons of the Indian Air Force were now in Arakan. I was going to put in for command of an Indian Wing consisting of two squadrons only. Too much of easy life, music, dance and Popsies had produced a reaction in me. I wanted to be back with the brave Indian boys returning back from a sortie over the battle zone of Arakan. Western desert of Africa and Tunisia was out of question for us as the Commander-in-Chief Sir Claude Auchinleck had definitely stated that the Indian Air Force will be used in Arakan only against the Japanese. Defeat of Italy was well in sight. All Indian reinforcements were going to Arakan and very little was going westwards.

I bought sufficient number of officer's shirts, trousers, ties, shoes etc. from the Officers shop in Washington. An exceedingly nice man was in charge of the officers shop Washington. I bought so much stuff from this shop that it lasted me for nearly two years in India.

A few more publicity parties were arranged by Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai before we were asked to prepare to return back to India. I made sure to buy about eight dozen tennis balls and about four dozen squash balls, as in India these things were just not available.

About the sixth of December 1943 I said good bye to all the dear friends, Mrs. Rehman, Lady Bajpai, Krishna, Bhagwati, Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai, Creagh Coen, Hennessy, Rehman, Siddique Chowdhry, and Altaf Qadir. I also said good bye and shook hands with all the girls that worked in our office in the Indian Agency General. Rehman, Siddique, and Altaf Qadir came to the railway station when I left for Miami at midnight.

This train had sleeping accommodation. I occupied an upper berth and slept fairly well inspite of the jerky movements of the train as she touched nearly eighty miles an hour on the route. In particularly all trains in U.S.A; a corridor is provided for entry to any portion of the train. Toilet rooms were attached to the first class compartments. I went and had a good shave and wash before going to the restaurant carriage for breakfast.

Food is excellent, in American trains. In fact food is excellent throughout the length and breadth of America. Even a tiny restaurant in any by street can provide lashings of roast beef and potatoes, vegetables and about six courses, with tons of ice cream and hot coffee at the end. My impression of the American people was that their scientists and doctors had experimented so thoroughly with vitamin value of food that their system of cooking had been rendered perfect. Their country could produce everything under the sun. The only thing America could not produce was bananas and mangoes. Bananas were being imported from West Indies in large quantities. Mangoes could also have been imported from India but there was this difficulty of refrigeration and a long distance.

Throughout the day the train sped through a comparatively less interesting country than Pennsylvania. There was no comparison with the trip between Washington and New York; especially during the month of October-November when the entire countryside is full of yellow and red leaves of the forest. Forests of Pennsylvania are most picturesque and colourful. The palm trees of Los angeles have a charm of their own. At about sunset we reached Miami. There was a slight difficulty of getting hotel accommodation as almost all first class hotels were full up. Eventually I managed to get a nice room in a second class hotel which was more comfortable than some of the noisy big hotels. I was tired due to a long train journey. I had a cold bath as Miami in December was still hot. After dinner I went straight to bed. I had intended to do some last day shopping in the states and finish my last dollar before catching a Liberator of the British Transport Command of the Royal Air Force in Miami.

Next morning I got up early and had an early breakfast. The sun was very bright and reminded me of home and Delhi. I heard the marching tune of a military band at a little distance. I went out expecting to see a few regiments of U.S. Marines marching out for overseas service. The band was playing the famous march; 'song of the marines'. I went out in the main street to find out thousands of people, men, women and children alike lining up the sides of the streets to watch a procession of a girls band in most artistic white silk ceremonial

uniform. The girls were really good looking. They had a perfect figure and they were playing the march tunes with the precision of a military brass band. This was excellent! There was a terrific ovation, clapping and cheering from the crowd. I enquired and found out that this was in connection with the raising of public funds and subscription for war. The evening news disclosed that a few million dollars had been collected in Miami for war funds. This was excellent.

I telephoned to a British Major at Miami Airport who was connected with the British Air Force Transport Command. He was exceedingly nice and came to see me at the Alhamra Hotel where I was staying. He informed me that today's departure for the West Coast of Africa was delayed due to some technical defect in the scheduled Liberator four engined aircraft. He told me that it will take at least two more days to rectify a major technical defect.

At last the day came. I received a telephone call to be ready at 5 P.M. I paid up the hotel bill and tried to use the last dollar usefully in America. In India there was no import of any kind. Even a good tooth paste like Ipana could not be found in the whole city of Delhi, Karachi, Bombay or Calcutta. I bought as many useful things as I could, including a few Parker and Schaeffer pens which were a novelty in India.

I restlessly waited in the front verandah of Hotel Alhamra. At last the British Major came in his own car and took me to Miami Airport where our Liberator aircraft named 'Gremlin's Granpappi' was being wheeled out. Inside the hanger a captured German Heinkel twin engined bomber was there. I asked one of the American G.Is- "How do you like a Heinkel?" The reply was "It has rotten workmanship. It does not compare at all with our beautiful ships". There was quite a lot of cargo on board 'Gremlins Granpappi' There were many aerial cameras, wireless sets and machine guns. We were only about ten passengers on board. We all got on board and then the door was closed and the engines started up. We taxied out with the screaming and screeching of brakes and the under carriage. Prior to take off, the pilot Captain Scouten; a very nice Canadian Officer, tested all four engines. On one of the engines

there was quite an appreciable mag drop and the banging noise when one mag was switched off. However, it cleared up after a little warming up and we took off low over the city of Miami. I shall never forget that sight. There was a blaze of multicoloured lights in the main streets of Miami. All big shops had their advertisements, displayed in Neon lights of green, blue, orange, yellow, red, or bright white lights. Americans are a colourful people. Lights of Miami in millions, and of all colours of the rainbow provided a glorious spectacle. I stuck my head to the port hole glass. We went right over the main street and then the pilot turned on his course towards the sea. We were now flying along the beach. Through the gathering darkness the outline of the palm trees could still be seen along the famous Miami beach. When I was at the Staff college, Quetta we saw a movie called 'Moon over Miami'. The beach looked exactly the same but there was a war on and there had been a submarine scare at Miami beach. The entire beach was fenced with barbed wire and patrolled by troops. Those famous dames of Miami were not permitted to walk about on the colourful sandy beach, in multicoloured swim suites and Bikinis.

Supper was served by the Steward very early. Very soon we were over the sea. Unlike our trip from Prestwick through Iceland to Canada; this trip was quite warm although we were in the month of December. We wore only a Khaki tunic and slacks. Our track took us over British West Indies. Early in the morning we were flying across the coast of Brazil and landed at Belem for refuelling and some breakfast. The change at Belem was unbelievable. From a most developed country we had come to something which looked like Peshawar or Lahore.

After take off from Belem Airport we went over the jungles of Brazil. My word! You have to fly over the jungles of Brazil to find out what these were like. Jungles of Arakan, East Bengal and Central Africa were thrown in the shade. For hours I saw no sign of population through the central jungles of Brazil till we landed at Port Natal on the East coast of Brazil. We were given some quarters in the transport Command officer's mess. We had a quick change and made up

a party of about four British officers, the Canadian crews and myself. We took two taxis and went down to the town of Port Natal. My word! This was exactly the same as Karachi. A man was pulling a rope with four goats at the end of it, across the street. An old tram or street car was moving up the street with a score of men and women dangling by the side. Some were trying to climb on top. Donkey carts could be seen trotting in the main streets in large numbers. Even cows and cattle strayed across the main highways. People were as dark as in India. We entered a restaurant and ordered some tea and cakes. Here I returned back to the tea habit once again. For six months I had got used to coca cola and cookies in the evening. This place had a few fast women. We exchanged smiles but that was all. Brazilian language is difficult to understand. Almost every one agreed that there was no point in getting too frisky with these dames because of the language difficulty. There was good Spanish music and we enjoyed our stay in this restaurant.

Flight Lieutenant Scouten took off from Port Natal, At about midnight, after a little technical repair had been carried out on 'Gremlins Granpappy',. Scouten informed me that in fifty crossings of the Atlantic between Miami and Accra in West Africa, there was not a single occasion when 'Gremlin's Granpappi' did not require some technical check up at Belem, Port Natal, or Essentien. The name Gremlin's Granpappy was so very true for her. I sat with Flight Lieutenant Scouten in the co-pilot's seat for about two hours. We had put the 'George' (automatic pilot) on. Scouten told me the following story when we were well out over the Atlantic.

"About a month ago I was on a regular transport trip between Miami and Accra in Africa. After take off from Port Natal as I was still at lower altitude on the sea; I put head lights down to see if there were any surface craft etc. down below. I was hardly about fifty miles from the coast of Brazil. I found a pack of six German Submarines being refuelled from a mothership. I sent an immediate W/T message in code to the U.S. Air Base at Port Natal and pushed off

on my track to Essentien and Accra. I had no bombs. I was only carrying Cargo and some military personnel. I was informed on return after two days that bombers were not readily available at Port Natal as it was only a transport base. By the time bombers were called up, the six submarines and the mother ship had disappeared well away from the coast of Brazil".

Gremlin's Granpappy's entire crew of six including the pilot, flight Lieutenant Scouten, the Co-pilot, Navigator, Flight Engineer, Radio Operator, and Steward were Canadians enlisted into the Royal Air Force transport Command. A few shots were taken from celestial bodies for a navigational check up. Long range M/F radio beacon from Essentien Island was fairly powerful and we picked it up at an altitude of approximately 10,000 feet above sea level when we were about 2-3 hour's distance away from Essentien. Just at dawn we came over the Island. What a lonely place! Except the British Resident or Governor's house on a hill top, I could not see any other population except a few fishing boats or a hut or two along the beach. The air base completely manned by the United States Army Air Force was a terrific place. Transport planes of all shapes and sizes were there. There were a few long range four engined bombers of the Liberator and Fortress type as well as a few fighters of the Air Cobra, Mustang, P51, Lightening P38, or Kitty Hawk, and Thunder bolt types for the defence of the island. I did not see any cruisers, destroyers or capital ships near the island. There is no doubt that British and American Navies must have been quite active in the near vicinity of Essentien island which was an island fortress like Iceland, or Okinawa etc. Hundreds of American airmen moved about the place. The place was strewn with engineering equipment like tractors, bulldozers concrete mixers etc.

Essentien was about the most dangerous runway I have ever seen in my life. It was a feat of American Engineering how a solid hill with hard rock was cut down in order to extend the runway right through the middle of the hill about 200 feet high. Aeroplanes had to take off through what looked like a mountain tunnel with the top off. Sides of the rocks were only a few feet away from the edges of the runway. To every pilot it must

have been a night-mare to go at full speed through the open tunnel just before lifting from tbe ground. And if any pilot swings off the runway; God help him because the rock of Essentien would not. We stayed only for a short time for a shave and wash and toilet. Soon we sped through the tunnel and lifted on the other side over the sea waves and breakers beating on the stony coast. I was amazed at the length and breadth of Essentien island. One end of the runway was near the sea and the other end was also almost touching the sea; and there was a colossal tunnel in between. This was the reason why Essentien Airfield was closed to all aircraft traffic at night. Several planes had crashed into the rocks during take off or landing at night. With all its dangers, Essentien was a fortress of defence for the Allies. Without its existence the German pocket battleships and the Luft-waffe would have played hell with our sea and air convoy systems for winning the war against a well determined and powerful enemy in Burma and the Far East.

We were gaining time in our flight to the coast of Africa. At Essentien, we had taken plenty of food on board. Lunch and tea was served on board. The journey over the sea was very monotonous as there was nothing to see except the sea and that was not very interesting. At last as the sun was getting lower on the western horizon, We flew along the western coast of Africa and landed at Accra just before sunset. This was a combined British and American airbase with tremendous transport, fighter, and bomber activity. An R.A.F. motor transport took us to the hutments of the R.A.F. mess at Accra. On our way we passed through an Africanvillage where the local negro women were boiling some kind of oil in big pots. The stink was simply unbearable. In our Indian villages also there is colossal stink but this smell was enough to put a hundred Indian villages in the shade. Why the devil did the R.A.F. cut a road through an Africanvillage? It was a sickening smell!

In the R.A.F mess, a barrack type of accommodation was provided. Each room had about five to six cots with thick mosquito nets. I went to have a shower. When I came back a British officer in the same room was complaining about the loss of four watches from his travel case. Local African servants knew that watches were

in great demand in Egypt, India and the Far East. Almost all air crews bought watches in Gibralter or Port Natal on their way to Egypt or India. I had also bought three Swiss (Tissot) wrist watches from an Arab Pedlar in the main street of Port Natal. These were quite cheap. In India, watches could not be procured even for a sum of rupees four hundred. This Arab pedlar was exceedingly happy to know that I was an Indian and Muslim. He sold the watches to me at a reasonable price. During war time tremendous amount of theft and stealing was carried out by local damned servants in Africa, Egypt, Iraq, and India. This poor British boy was almost in tears because with great diffiiculty he had saved a little money to buy these watches, one for his wife, one forhis sister and the remaining two for dear friends. The poor man was in sucha gloomy mood that he could not utter a word. I was so much moved that I took out my watches from the suitcase and offered to give him one Mother India had been exceedingly kind to her son abroad and gave me enough money never to feel the pinch in a tight corner. This gentleman had a terrific moral character and would not accept a present from me as a brother officer in the same uniform and the same pair of wings.

Next day I went to the terminal building and reported at the booking office of the R.A.F. transport command. A young British Flight Lieut asked me "How much kit have you got?" This was a difficult question. I informed him that I had three suitecases full of my own summer and winter uniforms plus the shopping I had done in New York, Washington and Los Angeles. The young Flight Lieut shook his head "Our regulations do not permit an ounce more than 40 lbs" was the reply. I was shocked to see a few British Brigadiers with red bands, carrying only a brief case and a small bag. I argued with the gentleman "I am an Air Force Officer who has travelled with the R.A.F. transport Command all the way from Miami. Why were my suitcases accepted with me at Miami, if you cannot accept these at Accra? Do the regulations change at different places of the world? I was sent by the Govt. of India on a diplomatic mission to U.S.A. I would request that you accept my suitcases in the same aircraft as myself, for Delhi."

The Flight Lieut, still shook his head and said

"Yes, we shall accept your three suitcases but these will follow you to Delhi at different intervals, where and when space is available on board R.A.F. transport aircraft". This was not a good proposition as I was quite sure that the suitcases would be smashed up by coolies during transit to Delhi and I was not sure whether I would be in Delhi or Burma within a few days of arrival in India. I was exceedingly disappointed and returned back to the R.A.F. mess with a view to depositing the suitcases in the R.A.F godown at the airport.

Then at lunch time a British Officer told me "Have you tried the American transport Command? The British are very fussy on regulations, which must be observed even if a man is stuck in the mud and is passing out". I took his advice and drove down to the airport once again after lunch. Next door to the R.A.F. transport Command was the U.S.A.A.F. transport command. A young American Lieutenant was on duty. I approached him very politely and explained to him that for the last six months I was on a diplomatic mission in America. I had bought many items of military and civil clothing in Washington and New York. Things were so beautiful and cheap in the States that I had three suitcases with me, one of these is full of tennis balls and quality cigarettes. The American Lieutenant laughed and said "How many tons have you"? This made me laugh and I replied "My entire luggage should not exceed one hundred and twenty pounds". I was exceedingly happy to know that the Amercan Air Force were so very kind and generous to a man who did not belong to their organisation but had been on a good will mission to their country only. R.A.F. transport Command at Accra were very fussy indeed. This was not understandable because after all, the same R.A.F., transport command had brought these suitcases from Miami to Accra. Whatever regulations apply to the R.A.F. in one part of the world should also apply in any other part of the world. Tennis balls, Cigars, cigarettes and Khaki shirts were distributed to all air force officers when I got back to Peshawar.

A DC3 Dakota aircraft of the U.S.A.A.F. transport Command was being loaded up. My suitcases were labelled for Karachi and soon we were up in the air heading towards the East. I was very happy that

I was bringing my suitcases along with me instead of leaving these in the hands of coolies and porters in Africa. I was most thankful to the young American Lieutenant. Accommodation on board this DC3 Dakota aircraft was not so very comfortable. Only bucket seats were provided. This aircraft carried a big cargo of aerial cameras, machine guns and ration boxes. Besides a heavy load of cargo, we were ten passengers on board, including five American young officers of the U.S.A.A.F, Four Chinese army officers, and myself belonging to I.A.F. Everyone sat tight. Conversation was out of question. After every three to four hours, the aircraft would come down on a jungle aerodrome where the Americans had provided all facilities of a modern aerodrome. Light refreshments were served and we were off again. A second American Dakota was also following us. Just after sunset, supper was served when we landed at one of these jungle aerodromes. There was a complete series of these small aerodromes right across the central belt of Africa from Accra to Khartoum. Once upon a time, this jungle belt was called the whiteman's grave, but how well the whiteman had tamed the tropical jungles of Central Africa into a modern aerial highway.

Our journey was a continuous travel from Accra to Karachi with short breaks in between for meals only. All passengers were young and tough. The metal bucket seats were very hard and uncomfortable and unlike the facilities across the Atlantic or the Northern African route, no pillows or blankets etc. were provided. My back began to ache after the first six or eight hours of travel. By now one by one, the American and the Chinese officers began to spread themselves out on the metal floor. Soon I was down also on the floor and fast asleep. My feet were touching some one's head and some one else's feet were touching my head. These were the discomforts of a war time travel. We were all comrades and fighting in the same war on the same side. If anyone had walked into the fuselage of that Dakota he would have seen ten American, Chinese and an Indian fast asleep on the metal floor like so many brothers or members of the same family.

We were woken up by the increase of pressure

inside the ears due to the descent of the aircraft. This was about four O'clock in the morning. We were taken to a breakfast room where puffed rice, corn flakes, post toaties, porridge, gallons of American cream and butter, Jams of all makes, fried eggs, and some hot coffee with thick American tinned cream was provided. "Well done Uncle Sam" said I. "In these blooming jungles: and the same breakfast that I got in Washington, New York, Los Angles or Miami! Well done Uncle Sam!" What a war organisation Uncle had set up in the wild jungles of Africa where nothing could be heard in the bygone days but the trumpeting of elephants and the roar of lions. "Uncle is a swell guy" said I quietly to myself. This was nothing for the uncle. Look at a whole wing of Skymasters and Curtiss Commandos taking iced coca cola over the Chinese Hump to General Chinault's forces operating in China. Well done Uncle! and our Quarter Masters were trotting around in circles busy calculating the number of two gallon Shell petrol tins, cleaned out for taking drinking water supplies, at the rate of one tin per mule and man in the western desert or in the jungles of Arakan and East Bengal.

Next day at about sunset we reached Khartoum which was a big air base developed by the Americans. In this region as far as the transport command was concerned, the Royal Air Force were using Almaza Airport Cairo. As far as fighter and bomber stations were concerned, these were sprinkled all over the western desert. But the battle had shifted towards the tip of Italy and the Island of Sicily. I do not remember whether at this time Sicily had been invaded by the combined American and British forces or not, but I remember that General Von Arneim had definitely been defeated by the 8th Indian Division in Tunisia. General Von. Arneim with the remnants of a Panzer division was put in the bag. His words were "If I had known that I was surrendering to such a glorious enemy-I would not have burried the hatchet".

We took off from Khartoum well after mid night and landed at Aden Aerodrome just after sunrise. It was such good company to find that the second Dakota was keeping up with us nicely. At Aden all the passengers became very friendly indeed. Air travel makes you

friendly. One of the passengers was Lieutenant Desper from the University of Wisconsin. He along with his friend was posted to a P38 Lockheed Lightening squadron of the U.S.A.A.F. operating from Arakan and East Bengal. Both of them were taking electrically heated flying suites, fur coats, leather boots, and fighter oxygen masks and a leather helmet and goggles fitted up with Radio telephony attachments. I told them the story of my lecture tour of U.S.A.A.F. airfields. Then I told them the story of my visit to the Max Factor sales shop in Hollywood and how I procured fifty metal cased lip sticks from a Popsy that would not play at first. Both of them roared with laughter. Then they called up all the other American friends and U.S.A.A.F. pilots who were proceeding to India on posting to American squadrons. Said Lieutenant Desper to his friends "Look-do you know what Major Awan is carrying for his girl friends in India? Fifty lipsticks from Hollywood when we could not get one for our girl friends in the States-and look what we are carrying to India; flying suites, leather boots, helmets and goggle and an oxygen mask!" Then they all roared with laughter and I joined in also.

Two months later I met Lieutenant Desper at the Grand Hotel Calcutta. I was on the way to Arakan for taking over Command of an Indian squadron and Lieutenant Desper was on ten days leave from the war front. I was rigged up with a gas mask, flying kit, boots and a service revolver and full jungle kit. He was listening in to a hot jitterbug music and waiting to pick up a Popsy with dark red iipstick. I held out my hand and laughed. "Now the story is reversed old boy. Look at my gas mask and the jungle kit, and you are trotting around with Popsies of Calcutta". There was a spontaneous roar of laughter from both of us.

After refuelling at one or two airfields like Salalah, Mesirah, and Jiwani along the coast of Arabia and India, we landed at Karachi Airport. I could not even thank the pilot and crews of the aircraft. There was such a rush of military personnel and aircraft of U.S.A.A.F. I telephoned to the British Adjutant of R.A.F. Depot Drigh Road and obtained a station wagon for Drigh Road.

Next morning Captain Finglas my friend from the Airport and an american Sergeant turned up to see me at the R.A.F. mess. When I showed them the contents of the suitecases, they were so happy to obtain a few Tennis balls ond cigarettes. Captain Finglas always used to joke about the American Zoot suites. So I had brought two bright checked shirts for him from Washington. He was exceedingly pleased and laughed.

Next day I got into a train for New Delhi. I wanted to obtain my orders for posting. I was most hopeful that Air Commodore Proud Inspector General of the Indian Air Force would give me command of an Indian wing consisting of two squadrons only. This was not expecting too much. Ten squadrons of the Indian Air Force were fully operating in the field. Mukerjee and I were the two senior most officers. Both of us were confirmed squadron Leaders with effect from June 1941. Mukerjee had been promoted to the rank of a Wing Commander and was now officer Commanding I.A.F. Station Kohat, which contained two squadrons of the Indian Air Force. Majumdar who was two years junior to me in service and was once a junior pilot officer in my flight when I commanded the senior 'A' flight of No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. from 1938 to 1941, had been promoted to the rank of a Wing Commander and was given charge of I.A.F. Operations and training a task which I had commenced in June 1941 at A.H.Q. Simla.

I was browned off with the diplomatic mission. Too many dinners and speeches would get any one down. Dalip Chowdhry had also gone tired of dinners and state functions and had asked for posting back to his regiment the famous 7th Cavalry. I was dying to get back to the flying side once again. I was positive that Air Commodore Proud would make me a Wing Commander and give me Command of an Indian Wing comprising of two squadrons only. At this time when Sergeant Middleton and Flight Sergeant Bishop could be made as acting Group Captains Commanding R.A.F. station Dum Dum Calcutta, it was in the fitness of things that I should be given command of a wing station of the Indian Air Force. After all, I was the son of the soil and one of the two senior most officers of the Indian Air Force.

I was most disappointed in my interview with Air Commodore Proud at A.H.Q. New Delhi. I was told to take over command of No. 7 Dive bomber squadron Campbellpur, which was proceeding to Arakan immediately. I had to complete dive bomber training at the bombing school Peshawar. I discussed the matter at length with the Air Commodore putting forward the argument that I had commanded a squadron three years ago. Only junior officers were now being given command of a squadron. I should be given command of at least two squadrons in the shape of a wing. But arguments cut no ice at all. I was however promised that when Indian wings were made, my case would be considered.

I caught the next day's Frontier mail to Peshawar. My wife Taj met me at the Cantonment Station. I was so happy to be back home at bungalow No. 1 Landhi Road Peshawar Cantt. To a man, his own wife looks prettier than the prettiest of Hollywood Stars. I was exceedingly happy to see my children, my brother and sister and my parents.

I was very much impressed by the dive bombing and night bombing school at Peshawar. A fleet of about forty Vultee Vengeance dive bombers and about half a dozen Mark IV long nose Blenheims were being used by the school. The school was commanded by Group Captain Sutcliff an old Cranwell Comrade. Sutcliff was one term senior to me at the R.A.F. College in the year 1930. Mukerjee, Sutcliff and I were together in A squadron. Instructors at the dive bombing school were all Australian officers of the Royal Air Force. A red haired Australian squadron Leader, nick named 'Ginger' was commanding the dive bombing portion of the school. On the first day I drew my flying kit including a Syd-Cot, fur lined boots, leather helmet with radio telephony attachment, flying goggles, parachute, oxygen mask, gas mask and full jungle kit including medicines of all types, dagger and a colt automatic. Mosquito boots, mosquito net, camp kit, camp bed, camp bath and a bush hat were collected from the R.A.F. stores when I was ready in a month's time to leave for Arakan.

Before going on to Vultee Vengance dive bomber, I had to polish up my training on a Harvard. I did only a few circuits and bumps and four days solo aerobatics

in a Harvard when I was asked to report to 'Ginger' for vengeance training. F/O Zahir Ahmad and a British pilot officer were instructing on Harvard aircraft. I was myself amazed at the rapidity with which I completed Harvard aerobatics within four days. I was taught in the old school when aeroplanes were aeroplanes. There used to be the old theory of "bank and rudder together-hold off bank-and ease the stick back". And there were none of these peculiar things as flaps, gills, boost and revs, fine pitch and coarse pitch, hydraulic pressure and retracting undercarriage, dive brakes and wheel brakes. Aeroplanes were aeroplanes like the Avro Lynx, Armstrong Whiteworth Atlas, Siskin, Hawker Hart and Audax and Westland Wapitis. These aircraft flew when you wanted them to fly and always came down in one piece when you approached Terra Firma.

Vultee Vengeance was a terrific dive bomber. The fuselage and wings were as big as that of a Blenheim. It was fitted with a double Wright Cyclone radial engine developing about 1200 horse power. It was an exceedingly heavy aircraft and many pilots were frightened of it. The beauty of a Vengeance used to be a vertical dive when dive brakes were pulled out. She went into a dive like a top and was quite easy to pull out provided she was trimmed tail heavy and engine boost and revs were reduced by at least 40% before going into a dive at about 12000-13,000 feet above sea level. Many pilots forgot to trim her properly with the result that the mighty mass of steel never came out of a dive. Another peculiarity was a series of six to eight electrically driven fuel pumps. These used to get red hot due to excessive revolutions and used to cease up. So it was considered advisable to keep one pair of selected fuel pumps switched on and keep on changing pairs after every ten minutes. Why the devil, the manufacturers Messrs Consolidated Vultee Corporation of America invented such a beautiful aeroplane with so many complicated gadgets. A pilot's attention was always taken up by something in the cockpit. But it was still a most loveable aeroplane ever invented by man upto the year 1943.

Vengeance aircraft were not fitted up with dual control cockpits. 'Ginger' told me to go up on a familiarization trip on the first day and get used to a few shallow

dives from eight thousand feet before going on to the bombing range where nothing but the vertical dive will achieve any results at all. I got into Vengeance 755 with a B.O.R. air gunner and carried out the proper drill before take off. 'T.M.P.-F.F.-T.A.G' was the rhyme for checking up proper setting of Trim, mixture, Pitch, Fuel, Flaps, Tail wheel locked, Amperes, and Gills closed. On opening up of the throttle a roar came out of the double Wright Cyclone engine. She always took a whole length of a 2,000 yards runway before lifting. Once the undercart was whipped in, she shot forward like a massive rocket. The beat of the massive engine was like that of a twin engined aircraft.

My first day's practice dives were carried out on the river Kabul. I selected a few bridges and came down on them but no dive was steeper than about 70° degrees. I had heard many strange tales where a Vengeance never pulled out of a dive. It was strange that with a proper trimming she was exceedingly quick in pulling out of a dive. Next day I went on a dive bombing trip with 8 practice bombs. The target was the white hundred yards circle of the bombing range near the Khyber Pass. I was very pleased with my dives which I thought were nearing 80° degrees. All my bombs fell inside the white circle.

In two day's time young Tahilramani from No. 8 Squadron came up on a refresher course. It was nice to see F/O Tahilramani who had come up from a front line aerodrome at Feni or Comilla. Every day we carried out a dive bombing attack on the practice range near the Khyber pass. Then two more Indian officers turned up at the school. At this time there was a batch of about a dozen British sergeant pilots undergoing training at the dive bomber school. There was a small number of about half a dozen boys on Blenheim conversion. They generally flew at night.

Within a month I had completed my training and had my log book endorsed by the C.O. During my training at the dive bomber school one day Arjan Singh came down in a Hurricane from Kohat to look me up. Only one minor incident happened during the conversion period. One day just before take off; as I lined up on the runway, the aircraft caught fire. I saw a flame between my feet just as I was opening the throttle and

the aircraft was gaining speed. I immediately pulled the throttle back, put the brakes on and switched off. In one second I and my airgunner jumped out of the aircraft. Thick smoke was coming out. Control tower had sent a fire tender out which was coming up at full speed. Flames began to come out of the engine. It was quite a task for the fire tender to put the fire out. Later a court of enquiry was held. The president of the court congratulated me on spotting the fire between my feet just as I was taking off. Had I left the ground, there would have been a big explosion in the air as in the case of poor F/O Das who was killed in a Blenheim at Allahabad during the year 1940-41. I was extremely fortunate that the fire and burning of a Vultee Vengeance produced no nervous effect on my system. The Court of Enquiry established the cause of the fire due to a spark from the radio telephony transmitter. A careless type of a British airman had cleaned the convas cover of the R/T transmitter with petrol and put it back in its position on the aircraft when the cover was still damp. Spark between the points set a small fire to the petrol fumes inside the space enclosed by the convas cover of the transmitter. The cover caught fire and later set fire to the fuel pipe lines; as a result, half a Vultee Vengeance disappeared in smoke and flames before I could say 'Jack Robin'. It was lucky, I was not airborne. I would not have been in a position to write this book, as I would have been with my friends, Habeeb, Henry Runganadan, Amarjit and others in Heaven.

In Cambellpur, boys of No. 7 Squadron were getting very happy indeed to know that I was taking over No. 7 Squadron. About the 20th of January 1944 a signal was received from Air H.Q. New Delhi posting me to No. 82 Squadron R.A.F., at Ramu near Cox's Bazar. This was not understood because 82 Squadron was a dive bomber squadron of the Royal Air Force. I talked to Group Captain Sutcliffe from whom I gathered that probably I was being posted for gaining experience.

I lost no time in saying goodbye to my wife and children and left Peshawar for Calcutta by train. I took very little kit with me. Only Khaki uniform, a parachute and bag, jungle kit and full camp kit plus my battle dress and full operational flying kit was taken. Mosquito

boots were a very important item. I was told that in Arakan, mosquitos were as big as a fully grown desert fly from Rajputana; and when they came out at night, nothing could stop them in the jungle.

The train was full of military personnel all the way from Peshawar to Calcutta. Cantonments at Nowshera, Rawalpindi Lahore, Jullunder, Ambala, Delhi, Cawnpore, Allahabad, etc. were full of new recruits under training. Seasoned soldiers of years training were all out in Africa or in Arakan. Every officer, soldier or airman wore the green battle dress with full jungle kit and a revolver. This was the new G.S. issue for war against the Japanese in Arakan. At this time, practically the whole of Burma, Malaya and South East Asia was in the hands of the Japanese. There was excessive movement of Indian officers and other ranks at all stations along the entire route. Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck C-in-C India had made a speech over the All India Radio Station Delhi, to the effect that the brunt of war in Burma and South East Asia will have to be borne entirely by the Indian Defence Services. Strength of the Indian army was sufficient at this time to gradually repulse the Japanese towards Burma, Malaya and Indo China.

At the Delhi Railway Station I met Major Azam of the XIX Hyderabad regiment. He was attached to the advanced Head Quarters of South East Asia Command under Lord Mountbatten. He told me that terrific preparations were afoot at the supreme Head Quarters for having a crack at the Japanese with combined operations, which meant a joint attack by the Navy, Army and the Air Force. I was exceedingly happy to meet Major Azam. He was one of the senior Indian Officers commissioned from the Royal Military College Sandhurst in 1929-30. In 1934 he was attached to 'A' flight No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. Drigh Road, as Intelligence Liason Officer and did an exceedingly nice job of work with us in our annual cooperation with the Sind Brigade during the annual camp at Hab Chauki and also with the Artillery Brigade at Hyderabad (Sind) during their annual range firing programme. Azam in 1934 stayed with me in the Indian Air Force Bachelor quarters commonly called Gandhi hill at

Drigh Road. I used to occupy room No. 1 Gandhi hill at Drigh Road, for three years i.e. from 13th May 1933 to 1st April 1936.

At Delhi I changed into Calcutta Mail. This train was also chock a block with Military personnel and officers moving to the front line in East Bengal. It was a real ordeal to get a place for a shave or bath in the first class waiting room. After a long forty eight hours journey I reached Calcutta. What a terrific rush of military personnel at Howrah and Sealdah railway stations. Wherever the eye could see, it was one vast sea of Khaki uniforms. Occasionally an air force blue uniform or a naval uniform came into view but the majority were all army personnel of the Indian Army.

I reported to the R.T.O. and was informed that a room could esaily be otained at the Grand Hotel. I was given a transport; a 15 CWT truck which left me at the Grand Hotel. I was allocated a double room with Lieutenant Khan of the Indian Medical service. When I came into the room I was exceedingly happy to Know that Lieutenant Khan was no one else but younger brother of Habeeb the late Squadron Leader H.U. Khan. We talked for a long time together and then we went down for dinner after a cold bath and change. Previously I was in a very dirty condition after having been in the train for nearly four days and four nights.

Grand hotel was practically monopolised by the Americans. So was the Great Eastern and every other first class hotel in Calcutta. The lounge and the bar was packed with American army and Air Force Officers. I sat down for a cold glass of orange squash. Within the first five minutes three officers from No. 8 dive bomber squadron I.A.F. Cox's Bazar joined me. They had been at Cox's Bazaar for nearly two months. They had come up for a few day's leave at Calcutta. There was plenty of wine, women, and song in Calcutta. Firpos and other night clubs were full to capacity. Never in my life have I seen so many women and so much wine and drinks (Whisky chiefly) flowing in Calcutta. War brings in its wake, vices also. Calcutta was a women's den. The entire city was full of them. I could never imagine that Calcutta could produce so many women whose only ambition was to have a good time. Calcutta

being the nearest big city situated to the rear of the front line of the operational theatre of war in Arakan, became a most popular leave centre for troops and officers. All the pretty and fast women of the big cities of India and the whole gang of prostitutes from Rangoon, Singapore and far Eastern cities were congragated in Calcutta.

There had been several night raids by the Japanese bombers, and bombs had been dropped in the dock areas. Several days before I got to Calcutta, there had been a severe night bombing raid carried out by the Japanese Air Force. Many coolies had been killed. Sergeant Pring of the Royal Air Force in a night fighter had shot a Japanese night bomber down. He was awarded D.F.C. and a commission in the Royal Air Force and a permanent invitation by Firpos night club to use their club as and when he desired. There was a total black out in the streets of Calcutta. A squadron of heavy tanks was passing through the main streets. I could hardly see the outline of these tanks. There was music from a score of night clubs and music and dance halls in the vicinity of Firpos. What an ideal atmoshpere for merry making. Troops and G.I's were not certain of life. A devil may care type of atmosphere prevailed. Enjoy when life is there. Who knows! dawn may never be seen again!

Poor Indian and British troops could merely look at the women and taste of a little locally brewed beer. Women and whisky could only be afforded by American G.I's whose scales of pay were fantastic as compared with the Indian and British scales of pay. A technical Sergeant in the American Air Force was paid a thousand rupees per month plus a free supply of coca cola, whisky, cookies candy, and tinned fruit juices plus a jeep which invariably provided an incentive to cuddle and nuzzle a cutie of Calcutta and have a good time. Thousands of dames just wanted a good time but there was a good proportion of gold diggers also. And war was an ideal opportunity for gold digging. Many of the women were fair Anglo Indians, Anglo Burmese, Anglo Chinese, and Malayans, but there was a good proportion of Indian Christians also. Thank God I never saw a single Indian girl in a Sari jitter bugging with

G.I's in a half drunken condition in the dim lights of an open air night club. Our Shrimati and the Begum stayed at home. Our noble and chaste Indian ladies; Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and other communities did a tremendous amount of war work for the welfare of British, American, and Indian troops. In Bombay when a British troopship came in; Parsee ladies of Bombay provided tea at the dockyard. Similarly at all big cantonments and in big cities, Hindu, Muslim and ladies of all the communities did a tremendous amount of welfare work for British and Indian troops.

In Calcutta it was a simple question of good time and gold digging for the thousands of women in skirts. I must say this, that American G.I's were exceedingly decent with all types of gay women of Calcutta. Never did a single occasion arise when a woman was molested and found sobbing in the dark streets. Our own troops behaved in a much worse manner in France during the World War I (1914-1918). When I was a school boy I heard tales from number of troops from the famous Multan Lancers and Bengal Lancers recruited from my home town of D.I.K. in the North West of India. How our troops misbehaved with pretty white women in Marseilles and Paris till eventually both the cities and some of the public parks in other French towns were put out of bouds for our troops. How the Australian troops misbehaved in Bombay when at the outbreak of war, a troopship berthed at Bombay on its way to the Suez Canal area. Australians were also very good in the sense that misbehaviour was carried out with the women of the red light area only.

Gay life with women and wine did not appeal to the Air Force flying types. British, American, and Indian pilots merely had a drink or two and listened to the music. Merry making chiefly went to the share of those troops, Officers, and G.I's who were not directly in the front line. My own impression was that the front line made a person more religious and kept him out of merry making and mischief.

I was very hungry and moved in for dinner quietly, early in the evening. The dining hall was packed to capacity with American and British officers. There were a few Indian Officers also. Clasical string

music was being provided outside. There was hot jitterbug music, also outside the compound in an adjoining bar which was in bounds to American G.I's and British N.C.O's. After dinner I was keen to return to bed but these boys from No. 8 squadron I.A.F. informed me that a Sergeant pilot from No. 82 Squadron R.A.F. would be in the bar in the adjoining compound. So we walked into the adjoining compound which had an entrance from the other side of the main street.

There was pitch darkness in the main street. The air raid carried out by the Japanese Air Force had scared the civillians so much that none could be seen in the main streets of Calcutta after dark, except thousands of men in uniform A squadron of heavy British Indian Tanks went by. A rickshaw cooly asked us, "Do you want a rickshaw Sahib". We walked on after saying a gentle 'No' Thank you'. When we got to the open air dance show, it was packed to capacity. There were at least two thousand American G.I's with a few officers. The place contained about a thousand women in skirts of all mixed creeds and nationalities; chiefly Anglo Indian, Anglo Burmese, Anglo Chinese from Singapore and Indian Christians. Even in the United States of America, women could not jitterbug better than what our Popsies were doing. Never have I seen a stronger and more emotional dancing and a tighter hold round the woman's waist. Many were dancing cheek to cheek. Some G.I's were kissing in public. It was all good fun. A few drunken types could also be noticed. A bucksome dame with luscious bosom and a big round posterior was clinging to a G.I. in a demonstration of sexual desire. The G.I. held her as if a tiger was going to maul a human being in the Sunderbans. Many held their female partners round the buttocks.

The music became hotter and louder. How well our local bands had picked up American music. It was simply unbelieveable! On the next table to mine was a party of four British officers, but no women. Two tables away was a party of about five or six Indian officers but no dames. All the dames were with the American G.I's.

Someone introduced me to the British Sergeant

Pilot who was on a few days leave from No. 82 Squadron R.A.F. Ramu. I asked him about how the squadron was doing. He smiled and said "You will find 82 to be good fun". His voice was firm and serious. He did not laugh or joke and he was keeping away from too much drinking. He went on "It is a very fine squadron and we have played up hell with Akyab. There is tremendous amount of Ack Ack firing at Akyab. In the last attack, we lost a very fine Australian Flight Commander. He got a direct hit from the heavy Jap Ack Ack. A shell hit him in the air at thirteen thousand feet just as the squadron was commencing the dive bombing attack. Poor fellow was blown to smithereens". He paused for a second. "The squadron Commander; Gibbs is trying hard for a D.S.O. He already has a D.F.C. which was won over the North Sea in beating up enemy shipping with Blenheims. Both the Newzealander Flight Commanders, Sutherland and Macdonald will get their D.F.C's by the time you are with the squadron. It is easily the best squadron in Arakan. We shall be very happy to have you".

I was very pleased to have had this opportunity of speaking to a pilot of the squadron to which I was posted. I shook hands with him and wished him good night. These boys from No. 8 dive bomber squadron would not leave me. "Let us go to Firpos Sir. It is a better place". I did not want to disappoint them. So we walked up to Firpos and spent a very pleasant half hour there. Here too it was the same story. Red Hot music, American G.I's and dark Popsies. Firpos was out of bound to British other ranks, and Indian other ranks. Drinks flowed like water at Firpos. There was non stop music and dance programme with two bands in attandence. The number of women to G.I's was still small. There was one woman to every two G.I's. We were lucky to get a place to sit down.

Next day I reported to the Air Force H.Q. in Calcutta, and obtained a warrant for travel by rail and ferry from Calcutta to Cox's Bazar and Ramu via Chittagong. The train journey was most un interesting. Nothing was available to eat at any of the railway stations. This was most peculiar because at up country

railway stations one could still get everything to eat or drink. There was famine in east Bengal: Captain Tiwana of the Indian Artillery was with me in the same compartment. At Chandpur waiting for ferry boat we saw a heap that looked like a human body under a dirty sheet. We moved upto it. It was a dead body of a human being who due to utter exhaustion and famine conditions had gone to sleep in a state of coma and never awoke till vultures discovered that he was dead. Captain Tiwana showed three more bodies lying in the near vicinity of a local poor village. But there was no soul in those bodies. Vultures hovered above. I was informed that hundreds died every day due to non-availability of rice. Fighting was very heavy in East Bengal and Arakan. Poor farmers could not plough up their fields and grow ricc when bombing and shelling was going on their soil on such an extensive front. Means of transportation were limited due to excessive rainfall, and poor country roads; and then all the trucks, lorries wagons, and railways carried soldiers, airmen, guns and war material. Thus food became scarce for the millions of poor East Bengali civillian villagers whose death rate mounted upto a fantastic figure of a few thousand per week. Even the dogs around Chandpur and Golandu looked starved. Many dogs and vultures started on human bodies in the interior of the jungles; when a dead body was not discovered by the relatives in good time.

After we left the ferry boat, it was one long journey by road. From Chittagong to Ramu, only six miles this side of Cox's Bazar took me two days. When I got tired I stopped at a wayside aerodrome and saw the Adjutant with a view to finding out the correct location of No. 82 squadron R.A.F. I was very pleased to find an Indian Officer of the I.A.F. who informed me that I should carry on right upto Cox's Bazar but about six miles on this side of Cox's Bazar, a country track will take me straight to 82 Squadron. An R.A.F. truck with four B.O.R's was going out that way. So I got in the front seat of their Chevrolet 15 CWT. truck and joined up with a main army convoy. Engineers had done a wonderful job of work in consolidating a Kutcha broad track into such a good highway.

There was a continuous gang of men and women working on this track. Bricks were being fixed to a limited portion of the width of the track where the main wheels passed.

It was about 4 P.M. We asked the driver to pull up the truck by the side of the road. The four B.O.R's and I pulled our packets of eggs and cucumber sandwitches from haversacks. I had a large thermos flask full of tea which I collected from the last R.A.F. airfield which we passed on the way. I poured out tea for all B.O.R's and myself. We stood by the side of the road. A twin engined transport squadron escorted by two squadrons of Spits was on its way for a supply dropping mission on the Maungdaw Buthidaung front where a Japanese brigade had infiltrated behind our troop positions and had cut off a whole Indian Brigade from its supply lines. These tactics had played havoc with the brave Indian army during the evacuation from Singapore Malaya and Burma in the year 1941. But now these tactics were considered obsolete. In fact it worked out the other way round. We had a superiority of ground troops and air support both in number and quality, During the evaucation from Singapore, Malaya, and Burma, Japanese army had tremendous superiority of numbers, because the whole of the Indian army was in the Western desert of Africa and in the canal zone.

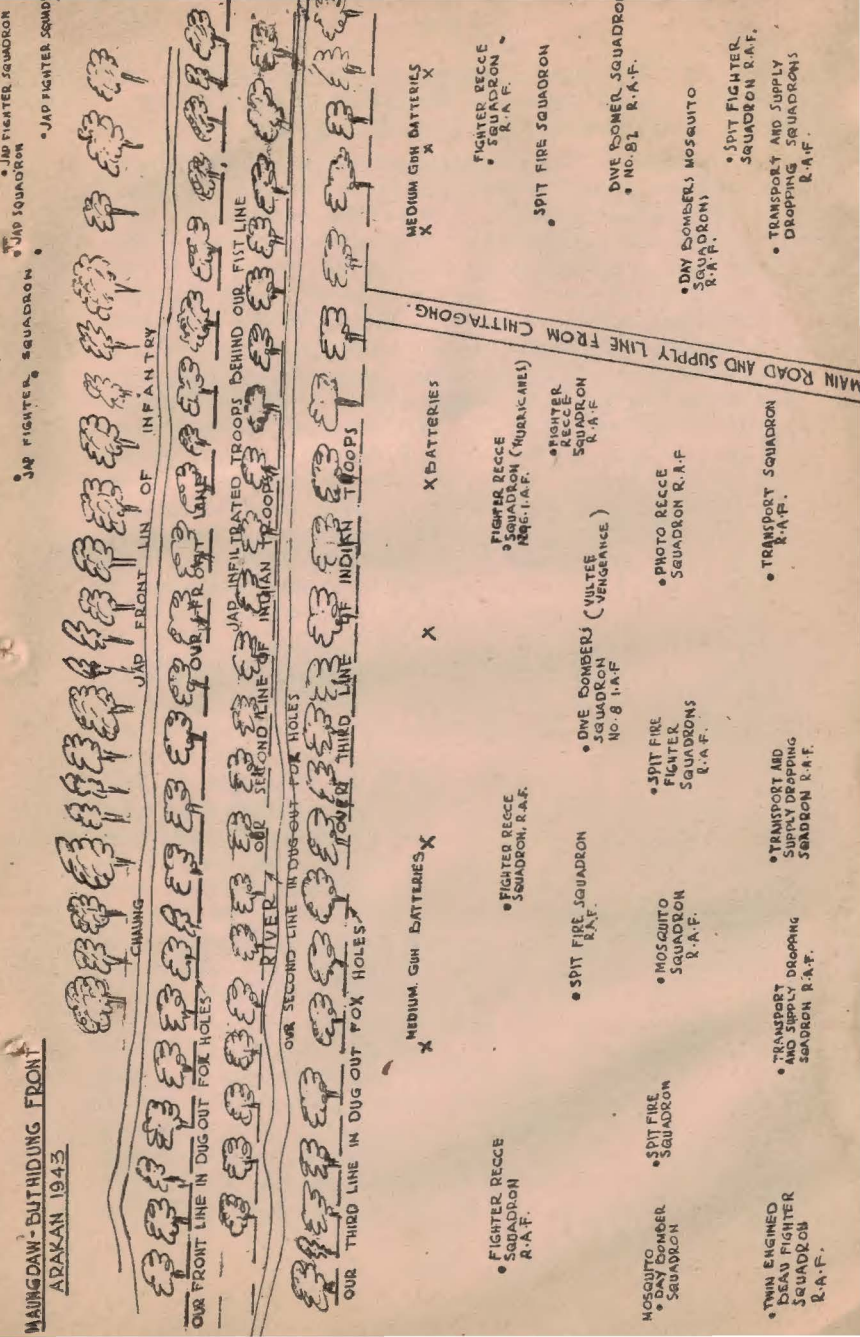
Japanese infilteration tactics consisted in getting behind our front line of troops who had consolidated their position in dug up fox holes. Thousands of Japanese troops infiltrated behind the front line and in the dead of night, and commenced to make noises like thousands of Hyenas, wolves and jackals let loose in the rear. Our front line troops on hearing that they had been cornered from the front and the rear also, used to get completely demoralised. Once trapped, it was upto the brigade Commanders to save their troops from the Japanese onslaught both from the front and the rear. It was always considered advisable to fight a battle on another day, rather than be trapped like rats and die of starvation, because the supply lines had been cut. The Commander always decided to withdraw in the dead of the night when Jap fighters and bombers could not spot our evacuation. Brigade after Brigade withdrew under the threat of Japanese infiltration tactics. We

always thought of fighting a battle on another day. That day came and was further converted to another day. Thus the war in Malaya and Burma became a series of withdrawals from 1940 to 1941, till eventually our reinforcements came. The Royal Air Force and U.S.A.A.F. brought every concievable type of aero-plane in the field. There were hundreds of twin engined transport planes, four engined long range bombers of the Liberator category; twin engined bombers of the Wellington and Mosquito categories; fighter recee aeroplanes of Hawker Hurricane category; fighter spitfires, P38 Lockheed Lightening Pursuit planes, P51 Mustang fighters, and Vultee Vengeance dive bombers.

The Indian army dug itself in at Arakan. A counter plan was discovered for neutralizing Jap infilteration tactics. Instead of keeping one front Line; the defence was provided in depth. Three regular lines in depth were provided along the entire battle front which extended from the shores of the Bay of Bengal at Maungdaw upto the hills of Assam and the Himalayan ranges. Neutralization of Jap infiltration tactics is shown in a rough diagramatic sketch. (Not to scale).

If there was any infiltration of Japanese infantry; it was not cared for at all by our front line which continued to face to the front and engage remnants of the Jap. Our second line closed up and engaged the infiltrated enemy with all the fury of war that could be let loose by those who had plenty of rest and sleep and good food provided by a very good system of supplies. Immediately news of infiltration was communicated to the advanced Head Quarters of the South East Asia supreme command under Lord Louis Mountbatten, an unending wild fury of our air force was lashed out in full force against the infiltrated enemy. The Jap was sandwitched between the front and the second line and was massacred by the R.A.F. and I.A.F. units who had specialized in close support tactics. Within a period of seven days there was nothing left of the enemy. After the first few successful attempts at the neutralization tactics against infiltration by enemy; our troops gained a tremendous confidence.

A stage was reached in early 1943 when news of infiltration by a Jap battalion or even a brigade, provided



mere laughter for our front line troops. At combined H.Q. also, everyone laughed at a worn-out tactical joke when news of Japanese infiltration was received.

We had a tremendous superiority in numbers and quality as far as our army, air force and navy was concerned. This relates to the time when I reached Arakan. During the early stages of war in 1940-1941 our infantry, Air Force or the navy could not get a hold at any place between Singapore and Arakan. Now the story was different. Our army and Air Force in Arakan was nearly three times stronger than the Japanese both in quantity and quality. Japanese Navy got such a hammering by the U.S. Navy in the Pacific that nothing could be located in the Indian waters. At Akyab we dive bombed several merchant ships but no cruiser, destroyer or a capital ship could be seen anywhere between Singapore and Cox's Bazar. Long range Liberator bombers returned back after a very successful trip but the Japanese Navy that once used to cruise freely along the coast upto Vizagapatam was nowhere to be seen. This is what a superior Air Force can achieve in war.

Our superior Air Force was contributing tremendously in neutralizing Jap, infiltration tactics. After execution of an infiltration move by the Jap, our front line troops were immediately cut off from the line of supply. This was a tremendous factor in the years 1940-41 and part of 1942. But now it cut no ice at all. Immediately our lines of supply to the front line was cut off by the infiltrated enemy troops; the Air Force was asked to drop supplies. Two squadrons of twin engined Dakotas took off at odd hours of the day, escorted by at least four squadrons of Spit XIV aircraft. A daily supply dropping mission was carried out. The result was that our Indian troops got their daily tea, tinned milk, flour, sugar, baked, bread, bully beef, cheese and the inescapable dog biscuits; much to the annoyance of our Japanese enemy who watched the entire supply dropping proceedings from 2000 yards away. Dakota after Dakota swooped down and dropped parachuted supplies on our troops as the four Spit Squadrons circled above watching any Jap Zeros that may jump on a supply dropping Dakota. If the infiltrated Japs opened fire on any low flying, supply

dropping Dakota, immediately a barrage of Vickers Berthea machine guns would open up both from our front line and our second line of Indian troops. Within a few seconds well concealed Indian mountain artillery and British field guns would open up on the Japs. and and if this was still not enough for them, Two squadrons of dive bombers; No. 82 R.A.F. and No. 8 I.A.F. would turn up within fifteen minutes and knock hell out of the Japs. This would leave them breathless till the entire supply dropping mission was over. As fresh stocks of rice, flour, ata, vegetables, ghee, dal, sugar, tea leaves and spices were received by the front line troops, they merely laughed at Jap infiltration. The joke was actually reversed on the enemy as our second line closed up to engage the enemy and the air force lashed out a non-stop fury.

We were still standing by the side of the main Arakan road watching our fighter squadrons joining the Dakota supply dropping mission. I poured out more tea for the B.O.R's. I had a very big thermos flask which contained a quantity of hot tea which even amazed me. It would not finish.

Then I noticed an I.A.F. jeep coming up the road at full speed. Rawail Singh's out of the ordinary light blue coloured turban, his beard and a genuinely sincere smile I could recognise from half a mile. Rawail Singh was one of the oldest clerks working in the orderly room under Corporal Reed when Bouchier commanded one and a half aeroplanes of 'A' flight No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. at Drigh Road in May 1933. Rawail, now by virtue of his seniority and hard work was a commissioned A and S.D. Officer doing the work of an Adjutant in No. 6 fighter Recce squadron at Cox's Bazar.

Rawail made a gesture to the driver and pulled up the jeep by the side of the road, only a few yards from where we stood. With a broad grin he came towards me and saluted smartly in a pucca A and S.D. manner. "It is nice to see you, Sir, in Arakan. Are you taking over a Squadron or a wing?" said he. I smiled and shook hands with Rawail Singh. "I do not know Rawail. At present I am posted as Supernumerary to No. 82 squadron R.A.F. How are the boys?" The boys are doing exceedingly well-Sir" was the reply.

"Both No. 6 commanded by Mehar Singh and No. 8 commanded by Naranjan Prasad are in the near vicinity of Cox's Bazar. No. 6 are actually at the famous Cox's Bazar aerodrome whereas No. 8 are four miles this side of Cox's on the left hand side of the road. Fighting is pretty tough. Only a few days ago, there was a hand to hand fight between an Indian and a Japanese infantry battalion at Bawli Bazar. R.A.F. and Indian squadrons came in for close support. Japanese battalion was completely cut off from the main force. We were unlucky in losing young F/O Rippie Reporter who was shot down into a marsh and is still lying upside down. No one can get upto him as the marsh extends upto a few miles. Two names have gone up for D.F.C. one boy from No. 8 Squadron is also recommanded for a D.F.C."

I was exceedingly sorry to hear of the death of young Rippie, He was a grand fellow and one of the bravest of the Indian Air Force. I quietly recited a quotation from the Holy Qoran.

'To Him we belong and to Him we shall return'. Rawail told me that Rippie was persistently carrying out low front gun attacks against the advancing Japs, at Bawli Bazar. There was very heavy ack ack fire from the enemy. Rippie was hit and fell in the marsh upside down. The aircraft, a Hawker Hurricane was still lying there in the marsh. It was a most demoralising sight for returning I.A.F. pilots who flew low in the Arakan valleys after beating up the Japs.

Rawail pushed off in the jeep and we carried on with our road journey down the Arakan road towards Ramu.

The sun was setting as the truck turned right from the main road. Only a mile from the main road there was a beautifully rolled kutcha strip, very broad and very wide and level indeed. This was thehome of No. 82 squadron Royal Air Force. The name 82 was as famous in the South East Asia Command as it was in England where this squadron equipped with twin engined Blenheims had gained repeated distinction in the beat up of enemy shipping in the North Sea and in the Norwegian Fieujords. Squadron Commander Gibbs was awarded D.F.C. for operations in the North sea. This blighter was

such a determined type of an aviator that in a low beat up he took the mast of an enemy ship off with his wings. The aircraft hit the ship with such a thud that the air gunner was killed in the rear cockpit. Gibbs flew the damaged aircraft back. Instead of admiring his courage and determination, the Air Ministry showered raspberries on the poor man and he was demoted to the rank of a Flight Lieutenant. In Arakan also his squadron was putting up a magnificient show. Every fortnight a surprise attack was carried out on the port and harbour at Akyab. Dive bombing in close support of our infantry troops was carried out every day. Gibbs was a hot favourite for the first award of D.S.O. in the battle of Arakan. There were thousands of senior air force pilots in Arakan at this time. Squadron Leader Mehar Singh, Officer Commanding of No. 6 Fighter Recce Squadron I.A.F. was already head and shoulder above any British, Australian, Canadian, South African or Indian pilot as far as personal meritorious flying service and bravery was concerned. Gibbs had received a bar to his D.F.C. when Mehar Singh walked away with the D.S.O. (Distinguished Service Order).

Admiral Mountbatten Supreme Commander South East Asia flew down to Cox's Bazar Aerodrome in a Lockheed Hudson aircraft in order to confer D.S.O. on Mehar Singh. This happened about two weeks before I came to Arakan. F/O Reporter was still alive in Mehar's Squadron. As Admiral Mountbatten's transport aircraft escorted by six R.A.F. Spitfire Squadrons arrived over Cox's Bazar Aerodrome; at that very moment F/O Reporter was returning back after carrying out one hour's fighter recce sortie over the Jap lines East of Maungdaw-Buthidaung.

All fighter boys are extremely fond of having a little fun with twin engined transport planes. Lord Louis Mountbatten's twin engined Lockheed Hudson was coming in to land and was on the down wind leg with its under-carriage down and locked. Six R.A.F. fighter Squadrons which were providing escort to Lord Louis Mountbatten were marking time at a low altitude of 2,000 feet above Cox's Bazar aerodrome. Squadron Leader Mehar Singh and all officers-and men of No. 6 Squadron I.A.F. had come out to welcome Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supereme

Commander South East Asia Command. Poor Rippie had no idea that the Supreme Commander was in the Hudson aircraft. He thought it was just a Hudson piloted by a sergeant, on some transport mission.

Rippie carried out a mock attack on the Hudson and zoomed up after carrying out the attack, athwartships. Within half a second, six R.A.F. fighter escort squadrons peeled off individually and closed in on Rippie's aircraft. Rippie frantically waggled his wings and put his under-carriage and flaps down and began to bleat on the radio "Friends-friends-friends". Mehar Singh and the whole of No. 6 Squadron were watching the proceedings on the ground. Everyone roared with laughter. This taught a sharp lesson to Rippie who looked very nervous when he landed and went straight upto Mehar Singh with the remarks "Who is in the Hudson, Sir; anything big?" Mehar Singh kept a very serious face and replied "No. nothing very big. Only the Supreme Commander Lord Louis Mountbatten and Air Commodore Alec Grey, A.O.C. Arakan Group of the British Indian Air Forces". Rippie looked very pale and apologised most sincerely.

After award of D.S.O. to Squadron Leader Mehar Singh Lord Louis Mountbatten lunched with the officers of No, 6 Squadron I.A.F. in a basha hut situated on a rising ground. During lunch time, Mehar asked Lord Louis Mountbatten if he had seen six escort squadorns of the Royal Air Force peel off to chase a solitary Hurricane? and Mehar pointed towards Rippie on the other side. Lord Mountbatten laughed and said "Yes. I watched the proceedings. I do not think this young man will ever fool about with another transport aircraft".

Award of a D.S.O. to Squadron Leader Mehar Singh was a singular achievement for the Indian Air Force. Squadron Leader Majumdar was awarded a D.F.C. during the evacuation of Rangoon. This was the second proud achievement of the Indian Air Force. At this time standard of flying and operation against the enemy was very high indeed. Many pilots were being shot down on both sides. Mehar Singh's No. 6 Squadron had alone lost ten pilots in two months. Same rate of casualties was being experienced by all British Indian day bomber fighter and recce squadrons. Men like Gibbs of No. 82 Squadron R.A.F. who was a hot favourite for

the D.S.O. in Arakan, were left standing as Mehar Singh walked away with it. Mehar well deserved it too. He had the heart of a Bengal tiger, stamina and guts of a Punjabi bull and flying ability of a Himalayan eagle. He did not know what danger was. On lone sorties, Mehar would penetrate hundreds of miles into the heart of enemy country and obtain photographs of damaged and derailed troop trains carrying Jap reinforcements between Rangoon and Akyab. Many of the trains were bodily lifted off the rails and hurled into the Khud side by cannon firing mosquito aircraft. Mehar would take oblique photographs of the mass rescue work being carried out by the Jap Sappers and miners.

One by one, four junior boys were shot down when accompanying Mehar on these recce and low photographic missions. Fighter recce squadrons carried out their work in pairs. Front man did the job from a low altitude almost at tree top level. The rear man weaved in and out and protected the tail of the leader. Mehar's squadron had won great reputation with our front line troops. Indian recce pilots were generally nick named 'Maungdaw Twins' and could easily be recognised piercing deep into the enemy territory. They always brought valuable information back which was of strategic and tactical value.

Mehar's squadron consisted of about twenty officers with fifteen Hawker Hurricane 2 B aircraft fitted with eight machine guns and Hurricane 2 C aircraft fitted with four cannons. The squadron also had five aircraft as immediate reserve and one Harvard for training purposes.

Fighter reconnaissance work was about the most difficult task carried out by any squadron of the Royal Air Force or Indian Air Force. Besides carrying out tactical, photographic or artillery reconnaissance, one had to fight one's way back home through an area infested with Jap. Zeroes: and then everyone in the enemy lines fired on you as the Maungdaw twins came jinking and weaving at tree top level. Heavy ack ack, light ack ack, light automatic fire and rifle fire from Jap, Infantry was directed towards the Maungdaw twins.

Mehar was a great sport. When going out on fighter recce sorties, he used to take an equal share of

flying, both difficult and easy with the junior boys. On number of occasions I saw Mehar going out as No. 2 in the Maungdaw twins. A junior Pip O would be in front, carrying out the reconnaissance and Mehar would be continuously weaving on his tail and protecting a sudden pounce by a Jap Zero.

One day Mehar showed me a mosaic photograh about 100 miles X 100 miles taken at a height of 20,000 feet above sea level. It showed Japanese troop concentrations and movements near Rangoon. I simply marvelled how he had achieved this as no one could go near Akyab leave alone Rangoon. "How did you do this, Mehar?" I asked him. "Well it is quite simple" was the answer. "I always do such jobs alone, because so many do not know which is Yama Gishi and which is Mehar Singh. So Many aircraft are milling around and I am left alone with the mosaic photography". Then he laughed. This photograph was simply marvellous and contained so much information that the advanced army Head Quarters were over joyed.

This type of stunt was repeated by Mehar on number of occasions. Gibb's No. 82 squadron R.A.F. when they went on a dive bombing mission to a nearer target like Akyab were invariably protected by two to four squadrons of Spitfires. Gibbs and Mehar were close contestants for the coveted D.S.O. in Arakan, and Mehar eventually walked away with it. Even Gibbs had a word of praise for Mehar who was an exceptionally brave pilot.

No. 6 Squadron consisted of only two flights 'A' flight was commanded by Flight Lieutenant Hassan and B flight was commanded by Flight Lieutenant Shiv Dev Singh. One day Shiv Dev was shot down by the enemy ground fire. He forced landed in the Taung Bazaar valley with a broken propellor. He was exceptionally lucky to find a clear patch of elephant grass and he plonked down on wheels without any further damage. Immediately he ran into the thick tropical jungle and hid under a thick clump of trees. The tail charlie of the Maungdaw twins returned to base and informed Mehar and showed the pinpoint where Shiv Dev had forced landed. In a moment of calm thinking, Mehar always used to put his right

hand on the beard and then move the fingers and thumb gently towards the chin. By the time the fingers and the thumb met at the point of the china. a solution was arrived at. Mehar jumped into a Harvard and asked his Warrant Officer to take a spare magneto, a carburettor, contact breaker points, tool kit and a few other odds and ends. Soon Mehar was hovering over the spot where the Hurricane had forced landed. Hearing the noise of a friendly Harvard; Shiv Dev ran out of the jungle and began to wave to the aircraft not to land as the ground was very uneven. But Mehar had decided to land and did so after a few bad bumps over the rough ground. A tear of joy came to the eyes of Shiv Dev as he saw his hefty squadron Commander get out of the Harvard. "Sir it is extremely risky here as the Japs, are within two miles of this place; and there is a whole brigade of them". said Shiv Dev in a nervous voice. An Indian, when captured by the Japanese was given a dose of orieintal treatment. He was beaten up good and proper and slapped across the face for about an hour. Then his clothes were taken off. He was tied up with a rope and thrown outside a tent in the heat of the sun and the cold of the night. Next day he was again given a good kicking till his morale was smashed up. Then he was sent back to the prisoners of war camp. F/O Mukerjee is alive today to bear me out on this statement.

The warrant Officer and Mehar checked up the Hurricane which had a slightly smashed up propellor due to enemy machine gun fire. But the engine started up with tremendous amount of vibrations and jerking. Mehar got in the damaged Hurricane and asked Shiv Dev to follow in the Harvard. With terrible bumps and bounces both aircraft left the ground full of tall elephant grass. It was peculiar to see the Harvard flying faster than the Hurricane. When Mehar reached his base aerodrome the old croc was just about going to fall out of his hands. The whole squadron turned out to see the rescuer and the rescued. To Shiv Dev Singh, this was a new life but for Mehar this was routine work of a day's fighter recce in Arakan. When Air Head Quarters came to know of this, Air Commodore Grey was extremely happy that a valuable

Indian Flight Commander and a valuable aircraft were retrieved from the Japanese bag. There was a very big write up for Mehar in the daily war News "SEAC" under the caption "Squadron Leader Singh flies a crock back home".

One fine morning F/O Verma and F/O Massilramani of No. 6 Squadron had penetrated deep into the enemy territory and were carrying out most useful recce along the river Irrawady. This was a day when the Japs had arranged a very big air offensive over lower Arakan. Massilramani shouted "Rats-rats" twice on the radio telephony. Verma looked round and caught a glimpse of a Jap flight leader just peeling off for an attack on him. Verma banked steeply to the left and Massilramani banked steeply to the right. Unfortunately they were separated. Six Jap Zeroes had jumped on them from above. Fighter recce pilots had definite orders not to engage Jap Zeroes in dog fights as a Zero was faster and more manoeuvreable than a Hurricane. It was very difficult to catch Massilramani who was nick named 'The Black Cat of Madras' by Mehar Singh. When the Black Cat went through the valleys and tress of Arakan in an evasive action: no one could catch him. In a moment he went through a thick clump of Arakan teak. In a second he would drop down to the level of low water in a chaung with steep sides. He would jink and weave: over a hill top, through a clump of trees; down over the chaung, through the trees again and the Black Cat of Madras shook off a whole flight of Jap, Zero fighters in no time. But poor Verma was caught. He was an exceptionally good recce pilot and a good shot with the machine gun; but superb evasive action was a bit tricky for him, He kept on flying at about fifty feet above the jungle trees and he kept on jinking and weaving on his run towards home. Jap flight leader peeled off at about two thousand feet above Verma and came down on him with a roar of about eight or ten machine guns. Verma saw a screen of tracer bullets go past him. It was God alone who was helping him. The Jap, flight Leader went past him like a bolt from the blue. The Jap was crafty, Past Verma he banked steeply right. Turned well away and then shot up towards the sky in a climb. Poor Verma sighed a breath

of relief. Within a second there was a second burst of machine gun fire from behind and a rain of tracer bullets went past Verma's Hurricance. No hit again. Jap. No. 2 banked steeply to the left. Got well away from Verma's path and then shot up skywards in order to gain altitude for the second attack. Simultaneously Jap. No. 3 who probably was a youngster straight out from school, closed in on Verma. His fire was erractic and tracer bullets went all over the place. This youngster pulled straight up in front of Verma-in a gentle climb. Verma looked into his gun sight but was a little too late. What a beautiful target but it was late'.

Verma saw a hill in front. He went low over the hill and then dived towards a Chaung in an attempted to shake the Japs off his tail. But the enemy flight leader was an old hand at the game. He was delaying the attack but kept at a good height and kept his two followers in check also with the use of radio telephony.

Verma pulled up over the steep banks of the Chaung. He altered course for home and was just approaching the Buthidaung valley where ground fire from our own infantry positions would have shaken the Japs away who were sitting on top of his tail the whole time. Down into the Buthidaung valley the Jap, flight leader got his second attack. Verma saw a rain of concentrated tracer bullets go past his fuselage and wings. He heard a crack as he jinked. Was his plane hit, he feared? But there was no effect on the plane. Probably it was his imagination. Within the the next moment Jap No. 2 also went past him like a streak of lightening and turned away with a steep bank towards the left. Now it was the youngster's turn who came down upon Verma in a very inexperienced manner, pulling straight up in front of Verma, who was waiting for this opportunity. He increased the revs and boost of his Hurricane to a maximum and climbed up, Following the tail of the Jap-youngster. He looked through the gun sight and got the target well in sight before pressing the trigger. There was a roar from the Vickers gas operated machine guns. Jap. aircraft shuddered a little. Verma knew he had hit the target. He dived to ground level again as he knew the Jap, Flight Leader would never spare his life.

Our ground troops saw a Jap. Zero catch fire and crash, into the junngle. There were wild cheers from the Punjab and Baluch troops who were now firing away madly at the two remaining Jap. Zeroes. Our ground ack ack machine guns sprang into action and drove the attacking Zeroes away. Repeatedly the Baulch and Punjabis shouted "Save the son of Bharat Mata. Drive the Nippon Devils away".

When Verma landed at the aerodrome, he went straight to the officers mess and asked for a glass of cold water. He wiped the perspiration off his forehead and said in a calm voice without any emotion, fear, anger or triumph "I think I hit that Zero". Within an hour there was a relayed field telephone from the front line troops confirming that a Hurricane in a desparate fight had shot a Jap. Zero down.

It was heroic deeds like these which had made Mehar's Squadron so famous in arakan. Air Commodore Grey thought a lot of No. 6 Squadron. Lord Louis Mountbatten had personally congratulated Mehar when awarding him D.S.O. It was very usual to see boys of Mehar's Squadron returning back home with bullet holes in their planes. Ten of the boys were actually shot down and killed. About a dozen were wounded and sent back as invalids. A newly arrived boy at Cox's Bazar was so frightened that he could not sleep for days. Mehar had to send him away. A very strict disciplinarian, Mehar never smiled or laughed during duty hours, but always enjoyed a joke in the officers mess. Many regarded him as a heartless butcher who had no feeling for the boys. But this was far from correct. Whenever a boy was shot down, and killed, Mehar had a tear or two in his eyes, but he never showed it to anyone exccept comrades like me.

I had a lot of admiration for Mehar's courage and bravery against the enemy. Like Kurun Krishan Majumdar, Habeebullah Khan, or Henry Runganadan he was a firm believer that good pilots never die but just fade away like the petals of a flower.

Years later at the time of partition of India, Mehar opted to remain behind with the Government of India. He was promoted to the rank of a Group Captain and became the Air Officer Commanding Bharati Air

Force in the Kashmir Valley. Bombing of an alleged radio transmitting station at Murree in Pakistan and bombing of the Political Agent's house in Gilgit where a bomb landed right in the middle of the kitchen; was carried out by Mehar Singh. Later he landed a Dakota at Gilgit Aerodrome. When our Gilgit scouts rushed towards a Bharati Dakota with fixed buyonets, Mehar made the shortest take off run and went sailing over the hills of Gilgit and Skardu towards Srinagar aerodrome.

At this time Kohala bridge was very strongly defended by heavy ack ack guns of the Pakistan Army. Cease fire had not been declared between the Bharati and Pakistani outposts. Fury pilots of the Indian Air Force used to release their bombs from a high altitude over Kohala bridge when trying to dislodge tribal invaders. No one could come near the bridge in a steep and low dive bombing attack. On several occasions Mehar used to bring a squadron of Bharati boys and give them a demonstration of dive bombing. Even the tribesmen said, the man is either a magician or a prophet.

Going away from the subject and my sequence of thought; it probably is not the right place to mention that Mehar Singh was killed in a Civil Bonanza light three seater aeroplane in the year 1950-51 when flying in a thunder storm from Ambala to Delhi. The aircraft disintegrated in the air and fell in a sheet of flames towards earth. "To Him we belong and to Him we shall return".

Mehar never thought that a pilot could die in the air.

He always said "Old pilots never die-they just fade away." Mehar was about the most gifted man that I have ever seen in my life. In sports he used to play full back in Hockey for his college at Layalpur and also for the Indian Air Force. Reputed olympic Hockey champions like Dara used to say "With Mehar playing as full back for the opposing team, no one can dare score a goal".

In a local golf handicap championship organised at Drigh Road by Group Captain Milne; Mehar Singh walked away with the trophy in 1940 with a few British golf champions of Karachi standing in amazement.

Once in a partridge shoot in the year 1935, we were advancing in a line with Squadron Leader Hancock,

Aspee, Majumdar, Narender, I and Mehar Singh. A tricky partridge flew across the whole line of us and we opened up like a barrage of heavy artillery. The partridge flew on wagging his tail at the whole line of shooters. After the bird had almost vanished behind tall grass and shrubs, there was a loud report from Mehar's shot gun with a clipped muzzle. The partridge fell to the ground and we all laughed.

Mehar bought a delapidated baby Austin, from a Kabari Walla's shop for a sum of Rs. 400 in the year 1935. He towed it to Gandhi hill; Indian Pip O's living quarters at R.A.F. officers mess Drigh Road with the help of a camel cart. We laughed when the junk arrived on top of Gandhi hill. The very next day, with the help of one dozen mess bearers, Mehar put this car upside down and began to work on the engine-transmission, and chassis. In a fortnight's time this tin can was on the road in a running condition. At this Time Mukerjee and I kept sports Chevrolets 1933 and 1934 models. No one could pass us on the road between Drigh Road and Karachi. God alone knows what Mehar Singh did to his Rs. 400 baby Austin without the hood? Whether he put an aircraft carburettor or at least a Claudel Hobson jet inside his engine. On the road there would be a roar as Mehar's baby Austin would go past our Chevrolet sports two seaters. Mukerjee and I would be bent down with laughter and could not overtake him.

At the R.A.F. College in 1934 Colonials were not permitted to compete in the Groves Memorial Trophy for flying, otherwise Mehar Singh would have walked away with it as his British Instructor said.

When No. 6 Squadron moved forward from Cox's Bazar to Ratnap Aerodrome, Mehar's quarter was located on top of a steep hill about 100 feet higher than the ground. Mehar used to take his jeep up the vertical climb to the top of the hill. Many of the squadronboys and drivers tried this stunt but no one could succeed in getting to the top except Mehar.

For years Mehar Singh served under me in 'A' flight no. I Squadron Indian Air Force. I was very fond of him and was a great admirer of his ability, both as a pilot and as a talented officer. In return, Mehar had a lot of love and respect for me too.

After having drifted away from the sequence of thought I return back to the place where I arrived, at Ramu the home station of No. 82 Squadron Royal Air Force. First person I met was the squadron Armament Warrant Officer Clad in just a sleevless vest and shorts. He was heaving away at a pile of 250 and 112 lb. bombs. "Come on my lucky boys. Work for victory. We are not very far" said the British W.O. to his men whe were all working hard in the bomb dump. A fresh stock of heavy bombs had been received and these were being arranged in nice piles.

"Could you please tell me the way to officer's mess No. 82 Squadron" I asked. Immediately there was a polite reply from the British W.O. and he guided my transport driver to the officers mess.

I was quite tired and full of sweat in the sticky atmosphere of Arakan. I found the Squadron Adjutant in the mess which was a basha hut constructed under a clump of thick mango trees. The Adjutant told the Mess Corporal to allocate an empty bashahut in the residential area to me. Residential bashahuts were situated in the protected shade of a small hill. I was given one of the huts. The basha floor consisted of nothing else but a damp and wet earth and a raised platform made out of bamboo. This was supposed to be a bed cot on which I spread out my bedding which consted of two blankets, a white sheet and a pillow. I dumped my belongings which consisted of a gas mask, flying kit, parachute, mosquito boots and a suite case containing Khaki clothing; on the ground and spread out a canvas square bath on the ground. A tin barrel containing bath water was available outside my basha. I employed a small Bengali boy as my personal servant. He filled up my canvas camp bath. I took off my clothes and sat in the bath, splashing water all over my body. What a joy! When I rubbed soap into thick lather into my hair and the body, half the dust and dirt of Bengal and Arakan was washed out.

After changing into clean uniform, I walked down to the squadron mess which was located in a big bashahut under a thick clump of mango trees. The first person I met was Flight Lieutenant Sutherland who introduced me to the 'B' Flight Commander Macdonald who was also a New

Zealander. I was then introduced to Squadron Leader Gibbs and all other officers of No. 82 Squadron. What a pleasant company of pilots they were! 82 was made up of New Zealanders, Canadians and Australians. The squadron Commander was English.

My first task with No. 82 Squadron was to do a little local flying and practice dives on a sea target. Then Sutherland took me along in formation to check up my results before taking me along with the Squadron on a dive bombing raid. With in a week my chance came to follow the squadron as a Supernumerary.

The Squadron took off with twelve Vultee Vengeance aircraft. I was No. 12 in the attack. Generally the last man took photographs but on this occasion, the camera was given to No. 11 who was asked to photograph the results.

We took off singly from the Ramu Kutcha strip. Each aircraft carried two 500 lb plus two 250 lb high explosive bombs. After take off we turned left over the sea to Cox's Bazaar and joined up on the Leader of formation. I was No. 12 in this formation. When keeping station in a formation it was very difficult to look at the ground. When I did look at the ground we were well above 10.000 feet from sea level. All Air Gunners were keeping good watch. Every Air Gunner was standing up and scanning the skies. We were escorted by two squadrons of spit fires which kept well above us; to the right and the left. When we passed the Naf river, I was amused by P/O Randel who was Gibbs Air Gunner. I waved to Randel and there was a big smile on his face. In another few minutes we were over the area occupied by the Japs. We were on a tactical support mission for our own front line troops. Our objective was the enemy front line. I saw the leading aircraft slow down a little and then move to the left. On a prearranged signal, the flight Commanders moved us in echelon to the right. Now the entire formation was turning round the target. I could not see very well, when the leader commenced his dive, but I saw the fourth aircraft from me put his dive brakes on and then he went down in a vertical dive. It was time for me to get the belly doors opened and reduce boost and revs prior to puting the dive brakes, on. I saw the fellow on my left put his dive brakes on. Slowly the

brakes came out of the wings to their fully extended position as this man almost did a half roll and went into a vertical dive. In a dive bombing mission one has to follow the left hand man's dive promptly otherwise one is left away from the target which no one else has a chance of studying on the map and with the help of photographs except the leader. Others follow blindly knowing the rough nature of the target etc. I put on a vertical left bank almost rolling over on my back and then put the aircraft into a vertical dive following the tail of my left hand man who happened to be a canadian sergeant pilot. In that steep dive which only lasted for about four seconds from a height of 13,000 feet; I saw a wonderful spectacle. Three vengeance aircraft were in a steep vertical dive at a speed of over 400 M.P.H. The fourth one had just released the bombs near the ground and got away. I corrected the vertical bank and put the stick in he central position and well to the front. My aircraft corrected its aileron turn. Within a second or two the ground was coming up fast to meet me. There was a blazing inferno down below. Trunks of trees, human bodies, big boulders and stones and pieces of bombs were being thrown up high. The left hand man had put his bombs into the blazing inferno. By following his tail so well in the vertical dive I found that my nose and the bomb sight was plum in the centre of the blazing inferno. The ground and the trees became so big that it was time to pull out of the dive. I pressed the bomb release switch under my thumb on the control column and then heaved at the stick with both hands. My vengeance pulled out of the dive and went sailing over the tree tops. I promptly pulled the dive brakes lever in. With the closing of the brakes, the aircraft shot forward with the speed of a rocket. Vengeance was a very heavy aircraft. It almost weighed as much as a twin engined Blenheim short nose bomber. The momentum gained in a vertical dive was kept in a check with the dive brakes. Once out of a dive we all knew that maximum advantage could be gained from the diving momentum when the aircraft was eased out of the dive and the brakes flicked in. This pushed the aircraft forward with a faster speed than the escorting Spit-fires. On practically all tactical missions, Vengeance squadrons reached our own front line faster than the escorting Spitfires.

So much evasive action was taken by all pilots that I was left miles behind in catching up with the leader. No. 82 Squadron had been flying together as a team from the Fjiourds of Norway to the jungles of Arakan. Their bombing was perfect, their gunnery drill was superb; their evasive tactics were marvellous, and their formation flying was magnificient. Gibbs controlled them very well with the help of radio telephony. They were like a team of Hockey players when every player knows the movements of his collegues end understands the entire drill perfectly. I was a new man and had not fully understood their moves. My bombing from an individual stand point was as good as any one of them but I found that their movements were quicker than mine. I was thirty four years of age whereas all of them were within their twenties. I wish I had been younger and had a chance of commanding such a brilliant squadron.

In tactical dive bombing attacks, Gibbs always informed us on the ground before going up that after the attack, each aircraft will follow the Buthidaung valley and gradually join up on the leader after jinking and weaving religiously throughout the valley at a very low altitude. I followed his advice and sure enough I saw the whole squadron ahead of me, in the usual offensive formation when defending themselves against Jap fighters.

We returned back over Ramu in the same formation of twelve and then gradually moved into echelon to the right and then broke off for landing.

Next day, intelligence report indicated that excellent results were obtained by 82 squadron R.A.F. This was very pleasing indeed to me who was a new comer to No. 82 squadron.

At this time orders were received from Group Head Quarters that 82 Squadron will experiment with a screaming bomb. The idea was taken probably from the German Stuka pilots operating over the western desert of Africa. On the appointed date and time Air Commodore Grey, his Wing Commander Operations, Wing Commander Chater and many army and Air Force armament and operational experts turned up at Ramu to see the exhibition of a screaming and whistling bomb. A small circle was chalked out in the centre

of the air strip. P/O Sandilands, an Australian pilot ftom the bush country was asked to take four of these screaming bombs up in a Vengeance and show the results. Everyone stood within 200 yards of the target. They all knew that Sandilands could put all bombs one by one on a pin. Sandy after take off disappeared in the bright sunlight to a fantastic altitude. His aircraft looked like a tiny sparrow. Down he came in a beautifully vertical dive. We saw the silver egg released from about 4000 feet. Sandy made a most spectacular pull out of a dive only a few feet from the ground, and the bomb hit the target without a scream, a whistle or even a murmur. Every one laughed. Let us see the second one, said Air Commodore Grey. Down came Sandy once again in a 90° degree dive almost over the vertical. We saw the silver egg at about 4,000 feet but not a scream, a whistle or even a murmur as the bomb hit the target and Sandy made a spectacular pull out of a dive, with his belly almost touching the ground. Four dives were made in a most fascinating and spectacular fashion. Sandy hit the target at 5 yards, 10 yards and fifteen yards. The fourth was almost a direct hit. It was a magnificient exhibition of perfect dive bombing attacks by a pilot officer of No. 82 squadron. Everyone was most satisfied but the bomb did not scream, an item for which the whole experiment and exhibition was staged.

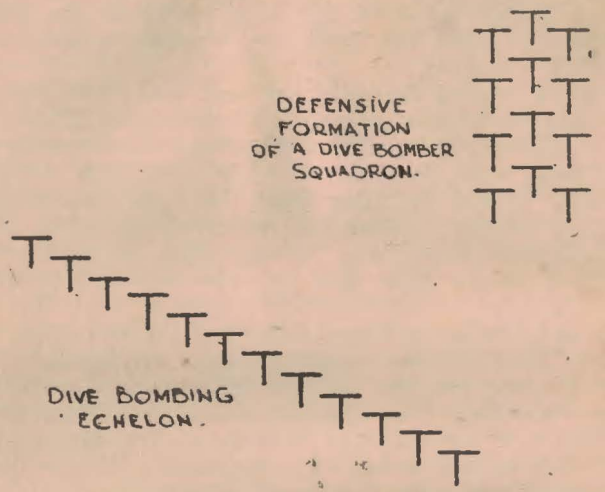
No. 82 Squadron had a total number of approximately forty pilots. About seven or eight Sergeant Pilots were always away on war leave in Calcutta or they were down in hospital with sickness etc. The remaining number was divided into two shift duty groups to work on alternate days. I was a supernumerary and flew with the squadron on a dive bombing mission when I wanted to. The idea was to gain experience of operations in Arakan before an Indian wing was created in Arakan. Operations continued ceaselessly. I had been with No. 82 for hardly a month when a whole Japanese infantry brigade infilterated behind our front line and was encircled in a wide pocket in the Taung Bazaar valley. Having qualified at the Staff College Quetta with a G2 category in July 1942, I was very keen to study the battle position

on the ground map as plotted by our intelligence officers. 82 Squadron had two R.A.F. and two army officers posted as intelligence liason officers. They kept their battle maps plotted well up to date and time, in a large mobile six wheeler van. Only a few yards oway a mobile six wheeler van belonging to the Royal Indian Corps of Signals provided all the latest information from the front line through a net work or W/T Channels.

I studied the situation map and wondered at the stupidity of such old and obsolete tactics as infiltration move carried out by a whole Jap Brigade. Immediately the Japs were closed on all four sides; Our medium artillery moved up. Our front line remained in tact without worrying about the enemy infiltration. Our second and third lines moved up. Supplies were dropped on our front line by twin engined transport aircraft. Our mountain artillery was a little slow in moving up to Taung Bazaar valley and the hills surrounding it. Dive bomber Squadrons were employed in the role of heavy artillery till the big mules and mountain guns moved up from the line Maung Daw-Buthidaung. It was very interesting to dive bomb the enemy on the first day of infiltration. I accompanied the squadron. The target was enemy infantry deployed about a thousand yards North West of a Pagoda in the Taung Bazaar valley. This time the squadron took off in formation of three aircraft at a time till the whole squadron was air borne and heading towards Tauug Bazaar. As usual, I was No. 12 I found that the Squadron was very vigilant on keeping a look out for enemy fighters. The air gunners were like watch dogs scanning the skies for a sign of enemy intruders. Every Air gunner had his eyes on the skies and fingers on the trigger of machine guns in the turret.

Gibbs looked round once and then murmurred something to his air gunner. What he said was, we found out later and he himself explained in the debriefing talk "If any Air Gunner is not watching the skies; put up a short burst above his head. This will bloody well wake him up". My air gunner F/O Joshi was just as alert as any of the British, Australian, or Canadian Air gunners. We reached the target high

up at 14,000 feet along with an escort of two squadrons of Spit-fires. Soon the belly doors were swinging open as pilot after pilot turned on top of the target following the leader. The formation had already changed from the defensive 12 to the dive bombing echelon.



Dive brakes were coming out in quick succession as pilot after pilot followed the leader in a vertical dive. Dive bombing had become such a usual drill that the team carried out its drill like a game of Hockey rather than complicated air drill. It came so simple and so easy that no effort was felt. When my turn came I followed the Sergeant Pilot on my left. The same sight met my eyes. Three aircraft ahead of me in a vertical dive. Within two seconds the earth was coming up to meet me. I saw the canadian pilot ahead of me release his bombs and then pull out of the dive. I was heading straight into the blazing inferno down below. Flames and smoke and big boulders and trunks of trees were thrown up to a fantastic height of a hundred feet. I released my bombs into the blazing inferno and pulled out. The aircraft had not fully came out of the dive when I whipped the dive brakes in. The Vengeance shot forward like a fighter aircraft. As I jinked and

weaved, there was'nt a Jap, fighter to catch me up with that momentum and speed, upto at least the first forty miles. I kept my height fairly low at tree top level till I was emerging out of the Taung Bazaar valley. Straight in front of me I saw the whole of No. 82 Squadron in a beautiful defencive formation. I slipped into my position as the 12th pilot and we proceeded home.

As we broke off over Ramu Aerodrome, one of the pilots had a hung up bomb. So he was instructed by his Flight Commander to proceed to the sea off Cox's Bazaar and shake the bomb off. He conveniently shook the bomb off which fell and exploded in the sea. The flight Commander positioned his aircraft in flight just below the aircraft which had managed to shake the bomb off. He confirmed by radio telephony that the open belly contained no bombs and the two of them returned to Ramu in tight formation.

In this attack two of our comrades were hit with bullets under the wings. One Canadian pilot had a wing tip torn off. I suspected that it was due to a bomb splinter from our own dive bombing rather than the burst of a Jap machine gun fire. 'B' flight Commander Macdonald; a very nice man from New Zealand had to make a belly landing as the under carriage gear and hydraulic system failed. The aircraft was a total write off, but Mac made the most spectacular and perfect belly landing that I have ever seen in my life. After landing I checked my aircraft for any bullet holes etc. but was very pleased not to find any.

We continued to deliver dive bombing attacks on an average of two attacks a day. The Jap brigade was cut off from all possible lines of communications. Continuously for ten days we hammered them till almost the whole Brigade was wiped out. Now they realized that the British Indian Air Force had a complete supremacy in the air and their infiltration tactics no longer bore any fruit.

On a holiday our squadron arranged a practice gnnnery drill with two R.A.F. Spitfire squadrons. I was testing a New Vengeance aircraft fitted up with an engine driven fuel pump in place of the six electrical fuel pumps which were very unpopular with all pilots due to

their operations at very high revs and a consequent heating and ceasing up. We generally used to keep two electrical fuel pumps on during flight and changed over to two others after every ten minutes. In a dive all the six fuel pumps were switched on. The New modification was a real blessing as botheration and a continuous headache of changing over the electrical fuel pumps was eliminated. The modification was a great success but it was to take a few months before Vengeii were fitted up with the new engine driven fuel pump.

As I came over the aerodrome, I saw the squadron getting ready for a take off and then a whole swarm of Spit fires followed the squadron.

Practice Gunnery drill was carried out with precision but the squadron had a terrible bad luck. Two of the boys collided in the air. Smith baled out and was saved but the second aircraft caught fire and went into a spin towards the earth. Both the pilot and the air gunner were killed. God bless their souls "To Him we belong and to Him we shall return". This boy's basha hut was next to mine and that of FLASH. His face remained in front of my eyes and mind for days. Such are the fortunes or misfortunes of war. Two more Canadian boys were posted to the squadron. Our Operations continued as a fixed routine of life. It looked as if the Divine Being had created us for this very purpose.

One day at lunch time, Squadron Leader Mehar Singh telephoned to me on the field telephone circuit from Cox's Bazaar. He was so happy to hear my voice in the telephone. "Zaidy I am coming up in my jeep straight away. We shall go for a swim in the sea. Bring your swimming constume with you. You will please stay for tea and dinner with us. Then I shall leave you at Ramu round about midnight". This was a very noble gesture as I was not on the flying programme for tomorrow. Jap, Brigade had been annihilated at Taung Bazaar. For a few days, pressure of flying had been reduced.

Mehar turned up at about 1.30. I introduced him to Squadron Leader Gibbs. He was very happy to have met Mehar especially as he was in the run for

an award of D.S.O. which Mehar had already walked away with.

I spent a very enjoyable afternoon on the beach at Cox's Bazaar with the boys from Mehar's squadron. We swam up to the deep water. The sea was most refreshing. Many officers and men from British Squadrons posted in the vicinity of Cox's Bazaar turned up for bathing. Looking from the seaside, tall thick coco nut groves provided an ideal setting of landscape.

Later we had tea at the squadron mess. I met many new boys whom I had recruited in 1941 at Delhi and Lahore in the inter services selection board. Now they were fully qualified pilot officers after graduating from the S.F.T.S. at Ambala.

I had dinner with Mehar's squadron and related some stories of my tour in the United States of America. The boys were very pleased indeed. After midnight, Mehar dropped me at Ramu at my Basha hut. There were stories of a man eating tiger prowling about the hill where our bashas were situated. I had to walk along the path cut through a bamboo jungle with the right hand on my colt automatic and the left on a jungle knife. I struck a match and opened the latch of my basha. Stories of a man eating tiger and with my next door Canadian Comrade killed in action only a few days ago sent a cold wave down my spine when lighting a kerosene Hurricane butty in my hut which was very dark and damp and the match would just fail to ignite.

The whole of Arakan was infested with wild animals. Tigers, panthers, and bison were not found in large numbers but elephants in hundreds played around on their favourite moonlight playground which was invariably the kutcha runway. Most favourite of their games used to be rolling a squadron petrol bowser along the runway. Frequently on a full moonlight night when loud rejoicing and trumpeting of the elephants was heard at midnight, it was invariably inferred that one team of elephants had won a game of tug of war against another team and succeded in putting the squadron petrol bowser with about five hundred gallons of hundred octane, across the whole length of the runway

into the ditch on the other side. Hence the wild rejoicing and trumpeting of the triumphant winners.

Almost all squadron technical officers were browned off with the elephants for pushing, pulling and rolling the five hundred gallons petrol bowsers on wheels, into the ditch and upside down so very frequently and almost everywhere. Shooting of elephants was forbidden by a SEAC supreme command order. This was due to the fact that a section of a Punjabi platoon of infantry in the forward dug out positions had a crack with a Bren gun at a lovely tusker whose long ivory tusks had induced the section Commander Havaldar to open fire from close range. A full burst of Bren gun fire hit the tusker in the forehead. He halted, faltered. then trumpeted in fury and charged at the section of Indian troops in the fox holes. This wounded elephant picked up the Bren gun and with this mass of steel hit the ten men of the Punjabi section and brained them. Next morning the tusker was found lying dead; still holding the Bren gun in his trunk, and all the ten men were dead also.

Immediatly, Command orders came out. 'No one will hit a wild elephant; In fact an elephant is quite a harmless type of a fellow if he is not bullied or annoyed. It is the most intelligent and crafty animal in the world and he has a tremendous sense of humour.

In the day time elephants, merely grazed in the jungle of thick grass and bamboos. On moonlight nights they liked playing about on squadron strips and kutcha runways. They were not seen about the squadron grounds on dark nights. Probably this was due to the fact that an elephant has small eyes and does not possess good night vision.

All Squadron technical officers thought of a new trick and tied up the petrol bowsers by means of chains to the trunks of big trees. This joke was not appreciated by the elephants at all who were deprived of their moonlight game of tug of war. They never understood our point of view that hundred octane petrol was a very costly item and could not be permitted to be thrown into a game of tug-of-war for their amusement. So the elephants took a strong dislike to our sense of humour and set about to teach us a sharp lesson. En block they went in for the squadron communal lavatories made of bamboo screens

and smashed the entire set of lavatories to smithereens. They repeated this stunt with all British and Indian squadrons and next morning there was no privacy for toilet at all but this was tolerated rather than annoying them further in which case they would have taken revenge on living quarters, bashas, and squadron messes, which would have been most fatal.

As far as the Indian Air Force was concerned, I do not remember if any officer or other rank was wounded by a wild elephant or tiger. In one case only, Flight Lieutenant Shiv Dev Singh's cocker spaniel was taken away by a panther. The poor dog could not even bark or whine.

Wild animals did a lot of damage to wounded pilots and airmen. P/O Zahid Hussain who was serving in a Thunderbolt fighter Squadron in Assam was shot down and he baled out. A squadron Comrade saw him descend into a thick bamboo jungle. He was wounded. He was probably eaten up by wild animals. Similarly F/O Dada Bhoy in No. 7 Squadron baled out over Assam. His parachute hit a thick cluster of bamboos. Eleven years have passed. There is no news of Dada Bhoy. It is presumed that he was eaten up by wild animals. In a wounded condition a poor pilot had no chance to fight a wild animal in the jungles of Assam and Arakan. Our search and rescue organisation was helpless as nothing could be observed in a thick tropical jungle with long bamboo trees and elephant grass. Sending ground parties was a hopeless affair behind the Japanese lines. No one would volunteer for this type of work as the idea of being captured by the Japanese and then receiving slaps, kicks and being tied up with a thick rope in the nude condition in a blazing hot sun was not very pleasant. However many search and rescue efforts were made by ground parties and some of these proved quite successful.

One fine evening there was a telephone call from Squadron Leader Naranjan Prasad O.C. No. 8 Dive Bomber Squadron I.A.F. Naranjan was a dear old pal and had served in my No. 2 squadron as a flying officer at Miranshah and Peshawar. Together we had bombed Walo Tangi in the Shaktu Algad, Waziristan, on many an occasion. Naranjan came down to Ramu in his own jeep and picked me up. He asked me to spend a couple of days with No. 8 squadron and watch the boys carry out dive bombing

attacks. I agreed on the strict understanding that one day he would let me fly with the squadron on a dive bombing mission.

I was exceedingly happy to be with the boys once again. Last time I saw No. 8 squadron was at Peshawar before I went on a military goodwill mission to America in June 1943. Eversince June 1943; No. 8 Squadron had collected their Vengeii aircraft from the storage depot at Allahabad and had moved upto Double Moorings and Hathazari Aerodromes in Arakan. They had been in active operations since November 1943 and were doing fairly well.

Naranjan's squadron was located about ten miles to the rear of Ramu, along the main road linking Cox's Bazaar with Chittagong. First person I met was F/O Marathe with his usual broad smile. That day the squadron was being led by Flight Lieutenant Chopra. Twelve aircraft arrived over the aerodrome after completion of a dive bombing attack. Remnants of a Jap brigade in the Taung Bazaar valley were still being bombed. No. 8 Squadron were doing exceedingly well. When they came over the aerodrome I thought their formation was not so good as No. 82 Squadron. Their cohesion and team work was also not of a very high class. 'A' flight Commander Chopra thought he was the Cat's pants and Dewan, O.C. 'B' flight who had some experience of flying in Wellington bombers on night bombing raids over Germany, thought there was no one like him in the whole of Arakan. This always resulted in a poor team work between the two flights. If Naranjan was not leading the squadron, the two flights invariably carried out independent dive bombing attacks. Their squadron gunnery drill was also not so good as No. 7 squadron I.A.F. or No. 82 Squadron R.A.F, which operated with Vengeii aircraft. Individually this squadron was doing an exceptional job of work. Over a long period of continuous operations, they never lost an aircraft which was shot down by Jap Zero's or Jap ack ack fire.

Tea in the officers mess, perched high up on hill surrounded by trees was most enjoyable. Everyone was full of humour. The boys asked me to tell them some stories of the night clubs in Cairo and Gibralter or stories and my impressions of a Burlesque show in an American

city. I told them of my impressions of the first Burlesque show I saw in America. I described the quick music and the fast lightening movements of the Burlesque and strip tease dancers. There was such a radiant glow on the boys faces.

I thoroughly enjoyed my stay with No. 8 Squadron for two days and then returned back to No. 82 to resume my flying duties. I was exceedingly sorry to have missed a day's flying programme with the boys of No. 8 squadron. A special task was allocated to No. 8 Squadron. and Naranjan could not very well throw this task on my shoulders.

One morning in the month of March, there had been a gentle drizzle of rain. There was a pleasant breeze blowing. I came in late for breakfast in the squadron mess. That day I was flying in the afternoon sortie. After breakfast I pulled out a deck chair outside the mess in the pleasant shade of a mango grove and started to look through an English illustrated newspaper. In the wild jungles of Arakan, one never saw a pretty woman except in pictures. I was deriving tremendous amount of entertainment by looking at a few pretty pictures in the London illustrated news and Indian films magazine. I heard a distant air raid siren, miles away in the rear areas. Then the air raid sirens started getting louder and nearer. Then there was the 'bang bang' of Bofor guns from the near hill tops. Now the Bofors of an adjoining squadron were busy. I rushed out in the open to see what was happening. Our mess Corporal (B.O.R.) an exceedingly pleasant fellow, came running upto me "Sir, there is an air raid on. Command orders say everyone must get into the slit trenches and have a steel helmet on". "Thank you Corporal" I replied "But I must see this fight".

Immediately there was a roar of aircraft engines. I rushed out further into the open till I was almost half way towards our strip. In a fight a man gets almost wild. My reactions were to run straight to my Vengeance aircraft camouflaged, dispersed and parked under a bamboo and palm grove. I could almost see my beautiful aircraft. My reactions were to take off and engage the enemy up in the air. But here everything was happening in split seconds.

I saw two Jap Zeros coming at full speed with two Spit-fires closing in on them from behind and above. It was a most exciting moment. When the two Spits came close in; I, was expecting them to fire but the Japs were not little children. Both executed a right and left hand right angled turns with such speed and rapidity that the Spit-Fires sheared off at a colossal speed.

I lost sight of the fellow on the left, but the right hand man came at tree top level. He saw one of our Vengeances standing in the open. He put his nose down on this Vengeance and opened fire. I saw the bullets clearly hit the ground as patches of dust flew up into the air. From a distance it looked as if Yama gishi had missed a sitting bird altogether. In fact that was correct. Not a single bullet hit the Vengeance. Either the Japanese were hopeless shots or Yamagishi had such a fright of God and the Spit-fire and wild Sikh ack ack gunners pooping off their Bofors from all hill tops around Ramu that the poor man could hardly concentrate on his gun sight and the target. I was almost wild with excitement, shouting at our Indian ack ack gunners "Shoot the damn fellow down-Maro Sale Ko-Maro Is Ki....."

I was not at all impressed with the standard of shooting of the Jap fighter pilot and the speed of the Jap Zero or the evasive tactics and standard of flying. When our Vengeii squadrons broke through the jungles of Arakan after delivering a concentrated dive bombing attack which shook the entire valley; we looked like a herd of wild buffaloes stampeding through the jungle: a sight which was awe inspiring. Each man jinked and weaved and the speed of our aircraft was like a bolt from the blue.

A month later when I visited the 14/10th Baluch battalion in the front line at Maungdaw, I was informed by the Indian troops, Indian officers and an exceedingly pleasant British Colonel Commanding the Battalion that a dive bombing attack on the Japanese front line which was only a thousand yards from where we stood was the most awe inspiring spectacle that humans ever saw. The whole hill shook like a leaf. And when the Vengii broke away through the valley

after delivering their concentrated attack, it looked like a herd of wild buffaloes or Bison stampeding through the jungles of Arakan, only to form up again for a wilder attack in self defence and self preservation.

But here the Jap was going away at tree top level like a first-termer from Cranwell. He did not go very far. Ack Ack gunners from the Punjab got him just off Cox's Bazaar and he fell in the sea.

My own impression of the Jap aviators in Arakan was that they were of two categories. One was the exceptional type which you saw very occasionally. Second was the first termer Cranwell type who could fly straight and level and kill coolies working on runways etc. One of these types had dropped a bomb from 6,000 feet and killed 80 coolies working on the construction of a cement concrete runway at Cox's Bazaar. Referring to the expert types; they were really good and most ferocious. Luckily there were not many of them left in Arakan as British and American long range fighters had finished off so many of the expert types.

During a supply dropping operation over our front line when a whole Jap brigade had infiltrated into the Taung Bazaar valley; a squadron of our Dakotas was jumped by about thirty Jap Zeroes which contained a sprinkling of those expert instructor types. A Dak was shot down by one of these types and forced landed on the marshy banks of a Chaung. The aircraft was written off completely but the pilot and crews got away with a few broken arms and legs etc. The expert Jap. fighter was not satisfied in shooting a twin engined Dak down. He came after it in a vertical dive with all machine guns firing. He was so determined and his mood was so ferocious that he kept his eyes on the gun sight and the forced landed Dak and failed to pull out altogether. The wounded British crews are probably still alive in some remote corner of the British Isles and they will bear me out that the Jap plunged headlong into the marshy banks of the river; his eight machine guns firing like blazes. He forgot to pull out and went straight in. This amused our wounded brothers in the Dak and they breathed a sigh of relief from a tyrant who was not going to show them mercy even in a forced landed and shot down condition.

No. 8 squadron I.A.F. came to play a game of Soccer against No. 82 Squadron. The ground was an improvised portion of our Kutcha runway. It was a most snjoyable game. Naranjan and I sat in a jeep and watched the fun. F/O Dogra had brought his pet monkey Benjee with him. Dogra was playing. Benjee wanted to rush into the playground towards its master. Everytime he would be chased out of the ground by one of the players. Benjee was a great sport and he was very popular with officers and airmen of No. 8 squadron.

On many occasions when the squadron went on a dive bombing mission; Benjee would insist to be taken along. He would run alround his master's aircraft; underneath the propellor and over the tail and on top of the cockpit. Naranjan hated the sight of Benjee running around Dogra's aircraft when the squadron was almost ready to take off on a mission. Eventually a party of airmen would come along and pull Benjee away.

One day Dogra thought of teaching Benjee a sharp lesson. He took him along on a dive bombing trip. As the Squadron arrived over the target, which was Jap infantry position, it moved into an echelon to the right formation. Pilot after pilot manoeuvred his aircraft dead on top of the target and followed the leader in a vertical dive from about 14000 feet. This was a bit too much for Benjee. From a position in Dogra's lap Benjee clung round his neck. Dogra growled at Benjee for obscuring his vision. Poor Benjee was so frightened that he left the neck position and clung to the back of Dogra's shoulders. The pressure of 'G' must have blacked out Benjee.

The attack was a great success. When the squadron returned to base; all pilots reported to the A.L.O. for interrogation and debriefing. When this was finished, Dogra looked around for Benjee. There was no sign of Benjee anywhere. An airman pointed to a small little black dot sitting on top of the roof of the squadron mess which was a long bomboo basha hut. Dogra walked upto the squadron mess and asked Benjee with all the affectionate phraseology to come down. Nothing doing! Benjee left his position on top

of the squadron mess and climbed up like lightening a high coco nut tree.

This was a great joke and all the boysof the squadron joined in requesting Benjee to come down. Nothing doing! Benjee would make faces at all of them. Dogra was half mad in temper and half amused. He went and picked up a .22 rifle and pointed it at Benjee who was almost obscure behind ripe coconuts and long green branches of a tree which almost extended half way to the sky. Half an hour had passed. Dogra was almost getting wild with Benjee. In a temper he aimed his .22 about a yard away from Benjee's head and fired a shot which went whistling above Benjee's ears. Benjee screamed in fright and hid behind branches and ripe coco nuts. Dogra gave up the effort.

After a whole day's perch on top of the coco nut tree Benjee came down to earth before sunset and quietly slunk into the officers mess where his master was finishing the last cup of tea. Quietly he got into Dogras lap and was given some biscuits and milk.

Next day when the squadron aircraft were started up for a mission, Benjee was found sitting on top of the squadron's mess Basha. And if anyone approached him for fun's sake and persuaded him to come down, he would straight-away run for the high coco nut tree, a few yards away from the Squadron mess and would not come down till the squadron aircraft returned back, landed and were being put away in the camouflaged pens.

This became a standing joke. When the squadron got ready, noise of the first aircraft engine would send Benjee galloping up to the squadron mess and if anyone out of shere joke insisted on persuading Benjee to come down; Benjee would straight away run up the tall coco nut tree and stay there till the squadron returned back; broke off formation, landed and refuelled.

Japanese were systematically being pushed back from the line Maungdaw-Buthidaung. In the North; operations were goining on very well indeed. In march 1944, No. 2 fighter recce squadron (Hawker Hurricanes) under the command of a very able officer like Arjan Singh an Ex. 'Q' flight pilot of mine had moved in to Imphal and were doing exceedingly well. Arjan was

awarded D.F.C. within the first month of operations. They lost a few boys but No. 2 Squadron for which I was the first organiser and a proud C.O. in April 1941 at Peshawar, was doing exceptionally well.

With the arrival of No. 2 Squadron at Imphall and No. 7 Dive bomber Squadron I.A.F. at Kumbir gram; Mehar's No. 6 Squadron was ordered to move upto Ratnap which was very near to the Jap Front Line. No. 8 Dive bomber Squadron I.A.F. moved upto a strip only two miles from Cox's Bazaar. At this time No. 1 Squadron was employed on Coast defence duties at Trichnopoly. Nos. 3 and 4 were still at Kohat in the Frontier Wing. These two squadrons were explicitly employed on Frontier Warfare against the Wazir and Mahsud tribes which nearly numbered two million men fully armed to the teeth. Number 9 and 10 squadrons were in the process of formation and training at the fighter recce school R.A.F. Risalpur. Nos. 11 and 12 Squadrons I.A.F. had just come up on paper, but due to heavy casualities in a modern scientific war, it was almost impossible to make the two ends meet. Recruitment was slow as many of the bright boys liked the army and did not volunteer for the air force. Approximately 30 boys passed out of S.F.T.S. Ambala after every three months. This number was hardly enough to make the deficiency of sick, wounded, and killed in the front line. However whatever numbers could be got together, were pushed on paper as the nucleus of Nos. 11, and 12 squadrons.

Operations went on. The tactical air force kept on hammering at the front line of the enemy in Arakan and Assam. Stratigical air force consisted of wellington and Liberator bombers of the Royal Air Force and Mitchell medium bombers of the U.S.A.A.F. These came from the rear areas as far back as Calcutta, Ranchi, Bishenpur, Asansol, Chittagong, Comilla, Feni, Jessore and Shamshernagar. Before the sun was down; one heard the drone of twin engined and four engined aircraft crossing overhead into the far off portion of the enemy occupied Burma with a view to engaging strategic targets at Rangoon, Akyab, Moulmein, Mandalay, etc. etc. Long range strategic air force continued their efforts throughout the night when moon was

bright and targets could be picked up. Apparently their task was easier as compared to the tactical air force who were fired on by everything under the sun. Japanese Air Force either did not possess night fighters or their radar and wireless system was so poor that night fighters seldom came up and intercepted our long range bombers. A clear 4 :1 supremacy in the air had been established over Burma and Assam by our Air Force. The Japanese tactics now included mass fighter sweeps once a month in order to show an apparent air strength. During these sweeps, Jap Zero squadrons were gathered together from far off corners of Burma and put up together in the vicinity of the front line near Akyab in order to demonstrate a false show of strength. During these sweeps, Jap Zeros would penetrate miles into our territory, carry out straffing of front and rear areas and then disappear towards their own rear bases never to show a face again for another month or so. Gone were the days when the Jap air force could carry out an unchallenged air raid over Calcutta docks in he moonlight. Gone were also the days when Jap bombers and Zero fighters almost blackened the skies like a swarm of locust in the year 1941-42. Skies of Arakan and Assam saw only a disorganised Jap air force which fought well but neither possessed the sting nor the kick of the by gone years when out of a whole squadron of sixteen short nose Blenheims of No. 60 Squadron R.A.F. in 1941, only one man returned back to tell the tale that the skies above Rangoon were black with Jap. fighter aircraft like a nest of wasps and hornets.

Systematically, since 1942 the Jap fighters and bombers were shot out of the skies by our tactical air force and the ack ack gunners of the Indian artillery. At that time the U.S.S.A.F. must have also knocked hell out of the Jap air force in aerial combats over the pacific islands. We read about the Jap Zeke fighters which had already made an appearance over the Pacific islands. But the American Thunderbolt, Buffalo, Air Cobra and Wild Cat squadrons had finished off the Zekes with the result that we never saw one in the skies of Arakan and Assam.

After a day's flying, I received a telephone

call from Naranjan Prasad that he was coming to pick me up. He came on the appointed time. Before approaching the strip from where Naranjan's No. 8 squadron were performing, there were hundreds of men and women working on the road. It was a dry season in the month of April. Echelons of supply convoys passing along the main Kutcha road created clouds of dust. The army engineers had given contract to the local villagers to throw buckets of water on the road and to repair any bad patches. Practically all villages situated near the main road and other subsidiary tracks, earned a living by keeping the roads and tracks well watered during the dry season.

In the evening pretty village girls and women with flowers stuck in their long hair tied up in a thick knot at the back, came out. Many of them only wore thin clothes which after getting wet from buckets of water, clung to their body and clearly showed curves of their body and well formed breasts. These women enjoyed showing their breasts to the sex starved soldiers and airmen as much as the soldiers and airmen enjoyed looking at a beutiful face with well proportioned breasts, purposely brought half way out of the wet blouse, when carrying a pitcher or bucket of water on the head, in a most tantalizing manner.

Many of the women were a great sport and would not hesitate in coming out for a drive in a Jeep if you knew how to play your cards well.

When serving with 82 Squadron R.A.F. I had heard the squadron doctor warn everyone to keep clear of these village women. For the first time I had heard the medical term 'Arkanitis'. This was derived from Arakan, and 'Arkanatis' was an extreme state of sexual desire where a British or Indian soldier was completely out of control of himself and chased a young woman in the jungle as a wild bull chases a cow for sexual intercourse.

Many cases had arisen where a British or Indian officer or soldier had caught hold of a pretty village dame when she displayed her bosom in such an ecstatic fashion when working on the kutcha roads and tracks and when throwing water for settling down dust and dirt.

Before reaching Naranjan's squadron he slowed

down his jeep and showed me a pretty woman carrying a pitcher of water on her head by the road side. She had a big bunch of flowers stuck in her hair tied up in a dainty big knot at the back. She certainly possessed a most beautiful pair of breasts that I have ever seen. She had a pretty face and the contours of her body were as perfect as an artist could imagine. Her blouse and clothes were wet and she had purposely brought her breasts half way out of the wet blouse in a most tantalizing manner which even began to tell on my brain I who had been wandering in the night clubs of Cairo, Gibralter, London and America, only a few months ago. I who had seen the most beautiful bosoms and torso of the strip tease dancers of American Burlesque shows of Washington, and Los Angles. Even I was hit with that sudden flash of a wild beauty in the jungles of Arakan.

Naranjan continued his talk as he slowed down the Jeep. This woman recognised two squadron Leaders of the Indian Air Force. She watched us from a corner of her eyes but she walked on gracefully with a gentle swing of the hips. The jeep passed her coming towards us. "Zaidy-this damn woman has created more trouble for my squadron than anything else. She is a red hot baby. She is married to an old man in a Mugh village situated on the left side of our strip. She is probably a Buddhist by faith. Her husband is too old and no good for her. Last night Young F/O T. under a touch of Arkanitis took a platoon of the army guards and surrounded the village. He entered the village and fired a burst of tommy-gun fire. He kicked out all the men of the village and then carried her away in his Jeep on the pretext that the village was surrounded by the Japs and all women and children had to be evacuated. It is such a black show that we cannot show our face to the village. I have hushed up the matter by distributing some money to her father and relations. If the Wing Commander comes to know of this incident there will be such a commotion. I do not know what to do with this damn fellow F/O T. And once the touch of Araknitis is over, our friend is tame as a lamb. There is not a soul who is as pious and holy as F/O T." I had such a burst of laughter. F/O T was a dear friend of mine. In the squadron mess I asked him quietly about what happened.

T. was quite serious about the whole affair. His reply was "Sir, this woman is a great enthusiastic Ammateur. She does not compare with the professionals of Calcutta; but by God, she could teach them a few things. She has been very friendly with me for a long time. Under the cover of darkness I take a jeep just outside the village. A toot of the horn is enough to bring her out. We drive out to a lonely spot, a coconut plam grove in the vicinity of the air strip. Under the light of the stars there is so much joy for both of us. She is clever as she also asks for presents. In this wild jungle of Arakan where can one find presents? So invariably I have to give her money.

On that particular night I had a little too much to drink and then Arkanitis got hold of me. She came out as I tooted the Jeep horn outside the village. A bunch of young and old men followed her through the village upto my jeep. They came up with daws in their hands. I got a little nervous and fired above their heads with a tommy gun. They all fled and we drove away to the coconut palm grove under the light of the stars. She is a great sport Sir and willingly cooperates and compromises when a hundred rupee Indian note is placed in her hand. I had done no harm at all Sir. Every damn woman in this Mugh village asks for it. Their own men are very ugly looking. I.A.F. is very popular among the dames around here". I kept quiet and told young T to keep off women.

Arkanitis was playing up hell with all R.A.F. and I.A.F. personnel and officers. A most interesting case came up when a young British airman of the R.A.F. regiment guarding Mehar Singh's squadron and the aerodrome ran after a young village damsel when he saw her having a bath in the nude state in a flowing stream. This man jumped after her in such a wild manner that the young woman fled towards the village screaming and without a stitch of clothing on her body. The village elders brought a deputatiod to Mehar Singh who in a most gentle fashion passified them. Mehar was a very tactful man. He sent this B.O.R. on a twenty day's leave to Calcutta and asked him to get rid of Arkanitis and then return back to the Squadron.

After a day's dive bombing programme Naranjan

asked me to come to the beach at Cox's Bazaar for a swim. I borrowed a swim suite from a young pilot officer who was Naranjan's army Liason officer. What a pleasure in an after-noon's swim in the surf off the beach at Cox's. It is one of the finest beaches I have ever seen anywhere in the world. What firm sand! The sea air was full of ozone. Wild birds sang in the trees. Call of the Cuckoo in the palm and coconut trees could be heard for miles.

Swimming too far out was not considered advisable as an under current had on a previous occasion dragged a man away. We sat under a clump of trees and drank some tea from Naranjan's thermos flask. We ate some sandwiches made of the inevitable bully beef and rationed cheese. It was such a glorious day. By now, landing and amphibious craft of all designs and shapes were being collected at Cox's Bazaar. These were being dispersed and comouflaged under thick clumps of trees along the beach. We knew that preparation for theassault landing and combined operation on Akyab were drawing near. It was really strange that things were taking shape now when the American press knew about the shape of things to come a year earlier in July-August 1943 when Lieutenant Commander Siddique Chowdhry and I were on a good will tour of the United States. In a Press Conference in New York, editors of some of the leading U.S. papers asked us to throw some light on the forth coming amphibious operations in Burma. I had no idea because this elaborate plan was not even known to Air Head Quarters New Delhi. Detailed plans were probably ready with the Supereme Head Quarters of Mountbatten's South East Asia Command. Siddique Chowdhry did not know much about it either. Funny enough; all editors of news papers in New York, knew it in July-August 1943 that South East Asia Supreme Command will launch a terrific combined operation show and a grand scale assault landing on Akyab.

And things were happening now. As we sat drinking tea under the coconut trees, an Australian infantry battalion went marching by in full jungle kit. All company commanders and the entire battalion whistled an enjoyable marching tune of an Australian love song.

They all looked very tough but not so hard as the Indian army who were pushing the Japs back successfully after years of jungle warfare in which casualities on both sides were very heavy. At sunset we returned back, and Naranjan dropped me at my Basha. What an enjoyable day!

Next day I tested a new Vengeance aircraft fitted up with an engine driven fuel pump. There was a tremendous temptation to head towards the Japanese line but Ops. room had no information about such a flight and it would not have been advisable to get mixed up with Jap Zeroes for no reason at all. Dive bombers, wandering over tbe enemy lines singly were a liability. I carried out two practice dives over a sea target and then returned back to Ramu to report success of the engine driven fuel pump.

Two days later, about the middle of April, No. 82 Squadron were called up to Imphal for emergency duties. There was a strong counter offensive by the Japanese army. A few of their shells had just dropped outside the runway at Imphall. 82 Squadron took twelve of their best pilots to Imphal leaving approximately fifteen old and new pilots behind. In the absence of the squadron we played around with dive bombing for a week or so.

One day there was a field telephone call from the advanced landing ground at Ratnap. Mehar informed me that Air Commodore Baldwin was coming up for a drink with No. 6 Squadron. A jeep was being sent to me nearly fifty miles away to come up for the party. I was ready with a small suitcase when Mehar turned up at our squadron mess. We had a cup of tea together and then away we went. Mehar believed that the most economical way of driving a Jeep was at an average speed of 60 M.P.H. Occasionally I would request him to slow down with a view to looking at a pretty figure sprinkling water by the road side. But Mehar had no time for women. To him an aeroplane or a jeep meant everything in this world.

The party that evening was a great success. Air Commodore Baldwin and Air Commodore Alec Grey came at the proper time. Mehar had laid on tremendous amount of whisky and cocktails. No. 6 Squadron had

a special mixture of cocktails which was called Arakan Special and the Maungdaw twins. If any person had these two within fifteen minutes of each other; he had to be carried away on a stretcher. Many men, like myself resorted to cold drinks only. There was so much of sandwiches, sardines on toast, potatoe chips, and other tit bits that no one could face dinner that night.

I retired to Mehar Singh's basha hut perched up on top of a hill, after midnight. An additional camp cot and mosquito net had been laid on for me. I was fast asleep when Mehar rolled in at about four O'clock in the morning. He must have seen everyone under the table before he left the squadron mess. I woke up as he switched on the ligt. He lighted a small kerosene stove and said "Come on, Zaidy. Let us prepare some ovaltine". I was positive that Mehar had polished off about a whole bottle of scotch whisky and many cocktails. Still he insisted on having ovaltine. I could not very well refuse the noble gesture; being a guest.

It did not take very long to prepare ovaltine. There was plenty of tinned milk which was supplied as field ration. We sat on two canvas camp chairs and drank ovaltine. I had a cup and Mehar drank two full glasses before retiring to bed.

The sun was well up when Mehar's squadron orderly brought a cup of tea. I had a laugh when I saw heaps of mosquitoes lying dead on the floor alround Mehar's camp bed. Mehar closed one eye as he talked to me "Mosquitoes can never succeed in biting me. My blood is bitter and it is so much full of alcohol". I laughed again and replied "They succeeded in biting me alright. There are lumps all over my body and there is not one dead mosquito near my bed". Mehar laughed.

This was an off day for the squadron as we had a party on the previous night. Nos. 20 and 28 squadrons Royal Air Force (Hurricanes) carried out the fighter recce duties throughout the day. This was exceedingly nice of them. No. 6 squadron I.A.F. Ratnap in Arakan and No. 2 Squadron I.A.F. Imphallgave a helping hand to their R.A.F. brothers whenever they had a squadron party. This mutual help broke the monotony of the jungle life.

A No. 8 squadron Vengeance dropped a message written by Squadron Leader Naranjan Prasad. It was

addressed to me and read as follows "Your squadron is still away at Imphall. If you are not doing anything else, come and try a hand at shooting a tiger. A big man-eater has killed a cow in the jungle at a little distance from our strip. A machan has been fixed up on a lofty tree. Come and try your luck with a tiger. Naranjan."

This was too much of a good news and I was not going to miss this chance. I took No. 2 jeep from Mehar's adjutant and arrived at the squadron mess of No. 8 Squadron I.A.F. which was at a distance of nearly forty miles from Ratnap. The boys were so happy to see me; Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs alike. They always had great love for Mukerjee and me who were the two senior most in the Indian Air Force.

Time was precious. Only three fellows volunteered to join me. It was F/Os Kamal, Gupta and Imtiaz. We selected four good rifles from the squadron armoury and took about a hundred rounds of .303 ammunition. In tiger shooting only one round is sufficient if it finds the mark. However we took a hundred rounds and divided these between the four of us. We took sufficient stocks of bully beef, loaves of bread, ration biscuits (popularly called dogs biscuits) and water bottles. We took a 12 volt battery and a standard Aldis lamp for illuminating mister tiger and his stripes before having a crack at him. We also took two squadron coolies and a local shikari for showing us the place where mister tiger had unlawfully killed a village cow.

We were dressed in Khaki shorts and shirts and still wore badges of ranks and ribbons etc. We carried our haversacks on the back with water bottles slung on the side of the hips. We carried a full jungle kit in the way of kukri, dagger, pith helmet and first aid kit. We trekked through a virigin jungle. I have seen many movies and pictures of the African jungles but I am convinced that an African jungle is not a patch on the virgin beauty of our jungles in East Bengal and Arakan. We crossed a stream of water which was crystal clear. We took off our boots and stockings and Waded knee deep through this cold stream of water. On both banks there were thick bamboos, and tropical growth of thees and plants. At places it was so thick that the rays of a Summer sun could not penetrate through the bamboo branches.

Tropical birds sang in the branches of thick trees. These song birds had lovely colours and plumes. Many of these birds were frightened away as we waded through many streams and trekked through the jungle. We had hardly gone about five miles South East of No. 8 Squadron Strip, when I found a few white Canvas shoes discarded by Japanese soldiers. At a distance of another hundred yards I picked up a Japanese Steel helmet with one star. This must have been worn by a Japanese Brigadier or a Major General. There was a big hole through this steel helmet showing that it was hit by a piece of shrapnel or the splinter of one of our 500 pounders. This place was dive bombed by No. 82 Squadron R.A.F. and No.8 Squadron I.A.F. about two months ago. The helmet had traces of blood on it. We discovered some tattered pieces of Jap clothing and army foot wear clearly telling a tale of our successful dive bombing.

The sun was setting when we came to a big patch of elephant grass and an opening in the thick jungle. We examined the carcas of a cow which had been dragged away by mister stripes. A beautiful machan had been built in a majestic tree which almost touched the sky. The machan was in the lower branches of this tree. A second machan had been built about a hundred yards away on another tall tree on a rising ground. By now we had covered about seven to eight miles from the squadron strip. We had taken sufficient quantity of water but now we were very hungry indeed because we had missed our evening tea also.

We sat down on the beaten down elephant grass and commenced to open up the haversacks. With the help of a tin cutter I opened up two tins of bully beef and one of cheese and butter. A tin of Salmon was also opened. There was plenty of food; thanks to Mother India and Uncle U.K. who always looked after their litte children in the field and provided them with enough rations. Our rations could never be compared with uncle Sam and his children-but we were very happy with what we got. The poor Jap used to pinch rice from the villages under occupation. Their supply routes were smashed up by the air forces in Arakan. Rice and fresh coconuts and jungle bananas was all they got in the forward most position where we were. We got no coco cola and candy but Mother

India and Uncle U.K. gave us plenty of tinned milk with which the officer's mess was always overstuffed.

We had a hearty meal and then drank a large quantity of water from the water bottles we carried. I stood up and surveyed the surroundings for a minute or two. Darkness was creeping alround. A Peculiar bird or insect was chirping so loudly that it almost sent a cold wave down ones spine when surveying the wilderness. No time was to be lost. It was getting dark very rapidly. We knew that mister stripes would return to his kill very early in the evening if he was hungry. We wanted to climb up the trees before mister stripes caught us with our pants down and in pitch darkness. The Shikari told me and F/O Kamal to climb up No. 1 machan. F/O Imtiaz and F/O Gupta along with a cooly climbed up No. 2 Machan. Within a few minutes it became completely dark. We could hardly see each other.

Our meal was so heavy at the end of a hard day's work and our trek through the jungle was so tiring that we stretched out on the machan for sleeping. I pulled out a white sheet from my haversack and spread it over myself. Kamal did the same. The mosquitoes were terrible. I have never seen or heard of a mosquito as big as a fly. And they carried out the attacks exactly like a squadron of dive bombers. The damn things had probably been studying our tactics. You heard a whole squadron of them turn up overhead. Gradually, throttles were pulled back and the engine revs were reduced. One could correctly imagine that the formation was pivoting above the target in echelon to the right as the squadron Commander opened his bomb doors and the dive brakes. And then mosquito after mosquito came down in a vertical dive. I heard Kamal groan as a mosquito delivered a sharp attack on his starboard ear. Simultaneously I groaned with a stinging pain on my arms and elbows. Only the local shikari did not worry at all. He neither had a sheet nor did he have any clothes except a loin cloth. He was an expert at mosquito killing. I heard him slap his body as he caught mosquito after mosquito, red handed on the target itself. After an hour or so it was so painful with the mosquito stings that I pulled my legs in and covered the whole of my body with the white sheet. It was better to be slightly suffocated by the bed sheet rather than be bitten by

mosquitoes. But the damn things got used to the bed sheet also and started biting us through the bed sheets. All of us were restless and turned from side to side.

Hours passed. I looked through the sheet and saw a peculiar shaped half moon through the branches of the tree. Either the moon was cock eyed and upside down as I have never seen in any other civilized part of the world or my head was dangling below the machan and I was seeing funny things.

A small bird called incessantly. This is the bird that complains to the moon about lack of rainfall. During the chhota monsoons and a period just preceding the Chhota monsoons, you hear this bird call throughout the moonlight on a hot rainless night. I looked at the pale moon several times and fell asleep again. It was a very interrupted type of sleep. The night bird called again. I heard it very clearly although I was fast asleep. In the stillness of the night, fall of a single leaf seemed to echo through the forest. I looked at Kamal and the Shikari fast asleep. I pulled the white sheet once again neatly over my head and fell asleep.

A monstrous roar woke me up with a start. Never in my life did I have such a startling waking up from fast slumber. I was informed by Majumdar months ago that during the night bombing of airstrips in Burma; on many occasions he had to wake up with a very unpleasant start when listening to the thud of aerial bombs and the overhead drone of Jap aircraft in the moonlight. At once I got an impression that there was a fight between a lion and a tiger just below the machan. For a few seconds my hands were unsteady as I pulled the rifle towards me. I touched Kamal to give me light from the Aldis lamp. The shikari whispered in Bengali 'Not yet-it is a bison. Wait till it comes out in the open'.

This Bison was too clever. Later we discovered that this was a prize animal which had ruled the jungle in these parts for several years. Even the Royal Bengal tiger would not give battle to this Bull. One moonlight night he was hit from the same tree and machan by a man who had trekked after this bull for days. The shot penetrated his back and must have been lodged into a solid bone. The bison carried this shot away and survived the injury. Now on every moonlit night he used to turn

up under the same spreading tree in order to challenge his adversary. Tonight luckily he found us on the machan; huddled up in white bed sheets. An animal's night vision is far superior to that of the Human Beings. He stood in a challenging manner right underneath the machan and kept a steady gaze at us. We could hardly see him after waking up from deep sleep, in which all human senses are rendered ineffective.

A period of two minutes felt like two years of waiting, but the bison would not move out of the dark shadows of the tree. I was getting impatient and whispered to Kamal for Aldis light. There was dead silence in the jungle and the humans and the beast surveyed each other for openining an attack. The bison knew that these types will never come down to earth for a sporting duel and an equal chance for both sides. The beast gave a last look towards us as we were getting the aldis lamp ready. Then he stampeded into a fast gallop across the bamboo thickets and elephant grass. Almost the whole jungle vibrated with the noise of his hooves. We sat up for the rest of the night, waiting for him; but he knew the jungle strategy and tactics, and did not return when we were ready for him.

As dawn broke we climbed down the trees in a very tired fashion. We were very stiff from lack of sleep, mosquito bites, and siting on a hard wooden machan. Early morning tea was not available to put us in a good mood. In a tired fashion we began a trek back through the jungle.

It was delightfull to listen to song birds in the early morning light. We came to a clump of tall trees which were full of thousands of monkeys, big and small. We all stood underneath this clump of spreading trees. A big male which was chasing a female in the top branches was being very ungallant with his lady love. So I threw a stone at him, in order to keep him away from monkey business. He did not appreciate this at all and made a filthy face at me. I was in a bad humour also without the usual cup of bed tea in the morning. I removed the safety catch from my service rifle and taking a careful aim about a foot to the side of the big male monkey's head, pressed the trigger. I was supposed to be a good shot once upon a time and had won the air force station

championship at Ambala in May 1939 when No. 1 Squadron I. A. F. and No. 28 Squadron R. A. F. were there. I purposely aimed away from the monkey's head as I wanted him to hear the whistle of the bullet only and not get hurt. As the bullet shistled past the male monkey's head, he jumped lik a mad man let loose from a lunatic asylum. He leapt from branch to branch and from tree to tree in such quick time that we all were doubled up with laughter. The entire tribe of monkeys, at least a few thousand in number vanished over the horizon of the jungle in the winking of an eye. And we were breathless with laughter for nearly half an hour.

We opened up a few more tins of bully beef, cheese and sweetened milk. But we missed our morning tea. Had we brought a small kerosene oil stove with us, it would have been quite easy to prepare a few cups of cha (tea). Soon we were on the trek again. We had hardly gone a mile when the shikari pricked up his ears. "Look Saab-elephants". Said he. Sure enough. There was a large herd of elephants on the move only about two hundred yards away. There was a deep chaung (small stream) on our left. Its banks were full of tall grass. The herd of elephants was nibbling at this grass as they moved forward at a gentle pace. They had not seen us. An elephant does not possess very sharp eyes. There were at least fifty females and just as many babies moving along at a steady pace with their big ears flapping forward and backwards. A few three quarter grown tuskers were the leading elements. One could easily make out a bull from the side, by its large size as compared to the females. Trailing at the end was a large tusker who was apparently escorting a few females left behind with very small babies that could not keep up pace with the rest of the herd.

"Here is our opportunity" said F/O Gupta as the big male was drawing up level to where we stood. He was hardly a hundred and fifty yards away and had his broadside towards us. In a second I saw Gupta, Kamal, and Imtiaz raise their rifles. I shouted at them "For God's sake; have you ever heard a shikari shooting an elephant from a distance of a hundred and fifty yards ? Don't be ridiculous. You will merely wound him in the ear or head. He and the rest of the herd will come

charging up and kill us all". But this had no effect on the three boys. "No Sir" was the reply. "We shall fire at the same time, aiming at the centre of the ear. He will just crumple up". Knowing that the three silly boys were determined to have a crack at the tusker, I persuaded them to wait for one second and let me climb up a lofty tree before they fired. This was a good joke and they laughed. By now the herd had got wind of us and started a gentle trot. The tusker once looked towards us and then urged the three females and their small babies to break into a trot. The three gentlemen once again raised their service rifles as they saw mister ivory moving away. In another second they would have fired. I heard Gupta say "One-two" and before he could say "Three" I almost yelled at them "Joking apart-please put those rifles down". As they looked towards my stern face, I pointed towards the three stripes on my shoulder. "Now would you listen". They immediately put their rifles down and were very sorry.

When we returned to the squadron we found that it was lunch time and boys of No. 8 squadron were settling down to a nice meal after returning back from a successful dive bombing trip. When we related our experiences in the jungle, the boys were very happy indeed and they all said "Let us all make a big party and attack Bison, tiger and elephant on foot".

The same evening I returned back to Ramu in Naranjan's jeep. No. 82 Squadron had returned back after a very successful trip to Imphal, in Assam. Japanese infantry had shelled our runway at Imphal. But now they had been successfully repulsed back to a position about forty miles east of Imphal. Sutherland told me that they had a hair raising experience once when over Silchar air strip after completion of a dive bombing trip east of Imphal. Chhota monsoons had set in and Gibbs could not locate the runways at Imphal or Kumbirgram. There were 10/10th clouds. Then Gibbs gave the order "Prepare to leave the ship". As all pilots were preparing their parachutes etc. Gibbs saw the runway at Silchar. This enabled the whole squadron to land at Silchar with almost a few drops of petrol left in each tank.

At this time No. 7 Squadron I.A.F. were putting up an exceptionally good show. They had carried out

three months dive bombing mission and were instrumental along with Arjan's No. 2 squadron at Imphal in repulsing the Japanese attack. No. 7 were extremely unlucky in losing a few boys. F/O Latif's vengeance had some carburettor trouble and crashed during take off. Latif and his air gunner were killed, as the bombs went off. F/O Dadabhoy was hit, He baled out but unfortunately fell in a thick bamboo jungle and was killed. A silly little airman of ours worked his pliers too hard on the nose pistol of a 500 pounder bomb when he was told by his British Warrant Officer not to tap but to wait till he returned. The bombs went off and killed ten Indian airmen and the poor British W/O whose advice was violated. Then F/O Duggan formated on three American Mitchell B25 bombers when left behind his squadron after an attack. The Americans opened fire on the Vengeance emerging out of a cloud, thinking it to be a Jap aircraft following them. American concentrated fire killed Sergeant Khan who was F/O Duggan's air gunner. This was really strange that Mitchell bombers could not recognise a Vultee Vengeance which was following them in an atempt to get home after being left behind No. 7 Squadron I.A.F. But anything can happen in war. Air Gunner's nerves are always at an edge and they fire on anything emerging out of a cloud. On several occasions our own bombers shot down our own fighters over the western desert, when a hot air battle was raging and friends could not distinguish between foes.

On my return to No. 82 Squadron I met Gibbs in the officer's mess and asked him to put me on a trip tomorrow. He agreed.

After trekking in the jungle for tiger, it was such a pleasant change to be up once again in the air with our Canadian. Australian, New Zealander and British comrades. We took off in flights of three and joined up on the leader. The squadron took a long sweeping left hand turn over the sea off Cox's bazaar. There was dead silence on the R/T One could only hear the roar of twelve double wright cyclone engines in close formation. The air gunners were very smart indeed today. Everyone of them scanned the skies for a Jap intruder. Zekes had been located in the Pacific and we were expecting them on any day over Arakan and Assam. F/O Randal, Gibb's Air gunner was smart as usual. He always gave a good smile

when he looked at me. I smiled back at him and raised the two finger sign so familiarly known to all military aviators. Randal laughed. I looked back at F/O Joshi, my air gunner and found him as alert as any other air gunner. I looked down and found that we were pretty high. I looked at my altimeter which was just about registering thirteen thousand. Gradually Gibbs reduced his revs as we had reached our attacking altitude. I heard blue leader calling blue three. This was a Spit Squadron Commander calling up one of his boys. Two squadrons of spit-fires were above us protecting us from the right and the left. The Squadron wheeled to the left. On a gentle visual signal from Gibbs, allflights moved in to echelon to right formation. Gibbs never broke tranquility of R/T (radio telephony) unless the squadron was jumped by Jap zeroes, when a red hot gunnery drill commenced. There used to be quite a number of shouts and calls from a Spit calling Spit or a Vengeance calling a comrade, in the thick of battle if Jap Zeroes appeared, otherwise we performed our dive bombing mission without a murmur on the R/T. And the ops room were very strict on R/T discipline.

We pivotted round the target again as Vengeance after vengeance opened the belly doors and the dive brakes, and went roaring towards earth in a vertical dive with a gentle spiral in it. In a dive bombing attack it is always a good practice to keep an eye on number three ahead of you because number two disappeared too quickly leaving little time for you. And if you were not on number two's tail it was almost impossible to get the target as the only person who studied the target on the map and a photograph was the Squadron Commander. The rest followed each other's tail in quick succession in a vertical dive with a little spiral in it. The target automatically came in the bomb sight. Explosions, fire, smoke, and hell let loose on earth almost filled my bomb sight.

I pressed the bomb release switch with my thumb ; on the top of the control column, and then heaved at the stick with both hands to pull my aircraft out of a vertical dive. She responded beautifully. Half out of a dive, I flicked the dive brakes in. My Vengeance shot forward like a jet fighter. It was amazing to note that our escorting Spitfires could not catch up with us for the

first forty miles. This was due to an incredible momentum gained in the dive. No Jap Zero ever caught a Vengeance in the first forty miles after the dive bombing attack. The danger came in after the momentum was lost. Vengeance being a fairly big aeroplane.

A very successful attack had been delivered that day by us as our intelligence reports confirmed. No, 6 Squadron I.A.F. carried out vertical photography of that area which was dive bombed by us and confirmed that the enemy was dislodged from that position after suffering heavy casualities.

Two days later F/O Sandilands gave a demonstration of evasive action after delivering a dive bombing attack. He carried practice bombs and came in a vertical dive. Poor Man's time was up. It was a most spectacular dive that Sandy had ever done in his life. And Sandy knew how to put bombs on a pin and then get away almost under telegraph and telephone wires. etc. He came roaring towards the centre of the aerodrome where a small white cross had been marked on the ground. Gibbs and about forty pilots and air guners and all the airmen watched the fun from the ground. It was a most spectacular dive. Almost all pilots held their breath. Everyone shouted " Pull out !" Sandy always knew when to pull out but today his number was up. He did a most spectacular and a violent pull out but the aircraft had a terrific speed and momentum. Sandy had left it a bit too late. Just as the belly was levelling out with the ground, the rear portion hit the ground with a God almighty thud. In the same pull out ; the aircraft went shooting up to almost a thousand feet in the air as a burning rocket. Then there was a loud report and a terrific explosion which sent splinters miles away in all directions. The aircraft, pilot and air gunner were reduced to ashes and strewn over a very wide area. " To Him we belong and to Him we shall return ". This was the end of Sandilands, a brave Australian pilot who had done so much duty for his motherland in winning a dive bombing war in Arakan. I was extremely sorry as Sandy was a good friend of mine and he was such a loveable type of a fellow,

No one spoke a word in the mess that day. Gibbs was down with dysentry. The squadron was led by the two New Zealander stalwarts; Sutherland and Macdonald.

In the front line no ceremonial parades are held when a pilot is killed. An Air Ministry order forbade pilots from following a funeral procession. It is a most demoralizing thing under the sun for a pilot to see Comrade after comrade fade away. We saw comrades shot out of the sky. We saw comrades hit the ground and get covered up with smoke and dust. Their memory haunted us for days. In war, religious faith in God, the holy prophet and the Koran had a most steadying effect, on me. Similarly all Hindu, Sikh or Christian pilots and air crews of the I.A.F. or R.A.F. were never frightened of death. We had one firm belief and that was 'Victory' and devotion to duty.

Naranjan's No. 8 Squadron I.A.F. got orders to prepare for shifting to the front by another ten miles. Mehar spoke to me on the telephone. Air Marshal Thomas A.O.C.-in-C Air forces in India was coming to spend a day with Mehar's No. 6 fighter recce squadron I.A.F. Ratnap. He was flying in a transport Lockheed Hudson aircraft from Delhi. Mehar was a lucky man. The only holder of a D.S.O. in Arakan, he was most popular with all the big chiefs. Air Marshal Baldwin of the tactical airforce had dropped in to have lunch with Mehar's Squadron. Lord Mountbatten Supreme Commander South East Asia popped up one day and had a cup of tea with Mehar. Now Air Marshal Thomas was flying down from Delhi all the way to Ratnap. This was wonderful. Mehar told me on the field telephone "We are giving a big party for air Marshal Thomas on such and such day. Please come. I shall send a jeep to pick you up." I had known Air Marshal Thomas when he was a Squadron Leader and C.F.I. at the Royal Air Force College Cranwell when I was a cadet in the year 1930-31. What a steady pilot he was! How very considerate he used to be towards junior officers, ond cadets.

Mehar's jeep came. We drove along the main road towards Maungdaw. Portions of this road were being refaced with pucca bricks. There were hundreds infact thousands of local men and women working along this road. Some of the younger women used flowers in their hair tied up in a big knot at the back. Younger and prettier ones indulged in the stunt of wetting their

clothes with the earthen water pitchers they carried for watering the dusty portions of the road and then showed their half concealed well formed breasts. We were sex starved in the wild jungles of Arakan. Looking at these village damsels watering a wartime highway gave me as much amusement as I could have got in seeing a strip-tease or a Burlesque show in America.

It was grand fun to be with Mehar once again. He had stacked up his Basha with sufficient stocks of tinned milk, coco, ovaltine, orange squash and whisky. Mehar almost spent all his pay in buying additional food stuffs like ovaltine, cheese, biscuits and whisky from Calcutta. What he got in the form of field ration could not last him for one day.

Air Marshal Thomas came and a terrific party was thrown in his honour. Mehar had never met Air Marshal Thomas before because Mehar went to Cranwell in the year 1934. Thomas knew me, Mukerjee, Amarjit, Bhupinder, Sirkar and Tandon the first batch at the R.A.F. College in 1930. In fact his flying log book contained all our names as he had flown with us all, in the junior terms. He was very pleased to talk to me. We talked for a long time about the old college days before the construction of the Grand Hotel (New College) as it was popularly called in 1930 when the foundations were being laid. Air Marshal spent the night at Ratnap. Next morning he left for Delhi by air at about 11. A.m. He was very happy to inform the squadron before leaving that one more D.F.C. was being awarded to No. 6 Squadron. Morale of the squadron went up by one hundred percent.

After the Air Marshal had gone, I was talking to Mehar about the receding Jap front line. An idea and a sudden desire to see the Japanese front line on foot and from a distance of two hundred yards came to my head. I put this idea into Mehar's head also. He agreed that it must be wonderful to get to within two hundred yards of the Jap front line on foot and to see what was going on there. We asked for volunteers who would risk their neck in getting upto within two hundreds yards of the Japanese front line in Southern Arakan. Two junior Indian pip O's and a British Army liason officer volunteered to

accompany us creeping upto the Japanese front line and seeing their machine guns on the ground for a change.

Away we went in Mehar's jeep which never travelled at a speed lesser than 60 m.p.h. on any type of road, track or a jungle path. We drove for an hour before coming up to Maungdaw where our front line troops were. Here no basha hut could be seen. Everything had been razed to the ground with extensive air bombing and shelling from both sides. Even the trees looked like ghosts, standing stark naked without a leaf. Bombing and shelling must have been so extensive that green grass and a beautifully green jungle which was once the pride of Arakan, now looked blackened and charred. It was quite an experience to be in the front line. Nothing could be seen above the ground. All our troops were in fox holes. The whole place was bristling with machine guns. In the brigade Headquarters which was in a dug out position, we met Major Timayya who was G2 Intelligence. I shook hands with him and expressed my surprise in finding that he was not commanding a battalion. He was one of the senior most officers. who graduated from Sandhurst about the year 1925. Timayya expressed surprise that I was not commanding at least two squadrons of the Indian Air Force. Timayya pointed to a hill to the left of the village Maungdaw (of course what was left of the village). There was a very big hill. "Our 14/10th Baluch are on top of that hill. Once you get on top of the hill, you can almost see the Japanese dug out front line positions with a naked eye and more clearly through a pair of binoculars." We had to leave the jeep in a camouflaged position and trek towards the hill. Mehar showed me a rising ground which No. 6 Squadron had to straff about three months ago when there was a strong counter offensive put up by the Japanese army.

We commenced climbing the hill. Nothing could be seen. It was amazing that nothing could be seen although we were in the middle of a very strongly held hill. At the bottom of the hill and on the reverse slope there were a few dug out caves deep in the side of the hill. There was a red cross sign clearly showing that it was our first aid post or a field clearing station.

But everything was under ground or in the deep caves located in the side of the hill.

I saw our sturdy mules winding their way up the hill through thick bamboo trees. These animals were carrying drinking water from a nearby pool to our troops on top of the hill. Then we found field telephone poles and lines going right upto the hill. We followed the beaten track of the mules to the top. What an amazingly clever and faithful animal! We lost hundreds of mules in action. Even in the thick of the battle they carried out their duty. Many of the mules were unattended. They went down the hill with empty metal containers strapped to their side and they came up the hill after these containers had been filled up by men at the pool of drinking water. The mules carried out the drill unattended. They got many pats and kisses from our troops for doing a loyal duty.

At the top of the hill we met a British Lieutenant Colanel with greying moustache. He was the Officer Commanding of 14/10th Baluch battalion. What a nice man! He gave us a very hearty hand shake and he thanked us tremendously for the close support provided for his troops when he came to know that Mehar was doing a tremendous amount of straffing of the enemy positions just opposite to that held by the 14/10th and I was a dive bomber who had carried many a successful attack on the directly opposite position to where 14/10th were. The Colonel took us along a knife edge where the hill ended in a steep precipice. Our last fox hole was at this position surrounded by a few tall trees. Through an opening in the tall trees and thick bamboos we could see the Japanese line on top of another hill directly opposite to ours. The distance of the Jap hill was not more than five hundred yards. Everything looked so clear. Even the bomb craters could be seen through a pair of binoculars. But the Jap kept their heads well down. They must have been watching us through binoculars. The Colonel did not want to frighten us airmen with the possibility of the Japanese machine gunners opening up on us as we were moving about the knife - edge like a bunch of novices.

In the last fox hole of the knife edge, I sat down with my feet dangling into the fox hole. A Baluch

trooper left the fox hole in order to enable me to survey the Japanese line properly. The Colonel handed over a pair of binoculars to me. Very calmly I looked towards the Jap fox holes. The opposite hill stood up in all its ghastly reality. Every tree and blade of grass looked black and burnt out. Trees looked like so many ghosts of dead Japanese troops. Every stone and bomb crater stood up well, through the magnifying binoculars. What a spectacle! Jap troops kept their heads well down. Their steel helmets looked like stones placed at the edge of fox holes. Nobody ventured to move about too much for fear of the other side opening up a whole nest of machine guns.

"Do you see that tall burnt out tree right on the edge of the Jap hill" said the British Colonel to me pointing to the right direction. I picked up this tree beautifully through the binoculars. Every large branch stood up well. It was a big tree. All its branches were charred with months of dive bombing and long range shelling by our medium guns. "Japanese long range sharp shooters and snipers used to climb up this tree and snipe at our positions continuously. In this very fox hole at which you are now sitting; we lost a few men one by one. We never realized that Jap snipers were provided with special long range rifles fitted with a telescopic sight. Only ten days ago your Wing Commander Chater of the dive bombing wing visited us. He sat in this very fox hole with a sporting rifle fitted with a telescopic sight. He was surveying the Jap hill when he suddenly exclaimed 'By God there is a man in that tree'. He did not waste a second. He took an aim through the telescopic sight and fired. At first everyone thought he was shooting a a line. Everyone looked at that tree through binoculars. A second later a large object fell from tree to the ground. Obviously it was a Jap long range sniper who was killed by Chater". This was really an interesting story and I surveyed all the trees carefully on top of the Jap hill with a view to locating an enemy sniper at whom I could have a crack. But the trees were empty. During dive bombing attacks, enemy snipers always left the trees and dropped into the fox holes for fear of bomb splinters and boulders which were thrown up sky high.

The Colonel went on as I and Mehar sat at the edge of our No. 1 Fox whole which was so deadly that many Baluch troops had died in that very fox hole. "Your dive bombing attacks" said the Colonel "Are about the most thrilling thing I have ever seen in my life. The formation is so spectacular and then when Vengeance after Vengeance comes tearing and screaming through the skies; the entire Jap hill shudders and quivers like a leaf. Even this hill where we are sitting, echoes and reverberates like the Quetta earthquake of 1935. And we are at least five hundred yards away from the Jap hill. I cannot understand how these devils stand up to these concentrated dive bombing attacks day after day. I am glad the Japs have no dive bombers, otherwise we would have been in the same condition".

No one likes an enemy; but I can say this much about the Japs that they are a very brave race. They were fighting with a religious fanaticism. Their supply lines had been cut. No one was permitted to bring a sail boat up the river or a chaung. Mehar's squadron bundled up many a crew of a sailing boat bringing up supplies of rice etc. The crews were machine gunned and the boats were sunk. No one could sing a song of the Volga boatmen or anything else like it, up a river or down a chaung so long as No. 6 Squadron I.A.F. were at Ratnap. With no supply lines of any kind the Jap front line must have been short of food and ammunition. Our fighter sweeps destroyed all the enemy convoys on roads. Long range Mosquito bombers used rockets on supply trains. Train after train was lifted off bodily from the track and hurled over the Khudside. Short of food and ammunitions the Japs still fought bravely with religious fanatacism reminiscent of the Arab religious wars.

I asked the British Colonel "after our concentrated dive bombing attacks by No. 82 Squadron and No. 8 I.A.F. why don't you assault the Jap hill and take it at the point of the Buyonet". "It is not so easy" was the Colonel's reply. "On uumber of occasion we have tried to storm the hill and assault it with buyonets and the war yells of your brotheren the Pathan troops. We almost got to the top of the Jap hill. And then lo and behold, from milions of fox holes, half dead and

dying charred bodies of Jap troops stood up with a bitter enfilading fire. Each Jap looked like a black ghost. Many of them had limbs torn away by the second's earlier dive bombing attack. But they stood up and fought back with such a stubborn resistence that our attack was repulsed down the slope of the Jap hill with severe casualties. On many a dark night I have led the attack myself. As we scrambled up the steep slopes of the Jap hill, there was bitter firing from the pre-fixed enemy machine guns. I have sent scores of my Pathan men to the base hospital with fingers blown away. In a steep climb over the ridge our hands are most vulnerable to the Jap machine gun fire."

This would show how brave the Japs were. They were fighting with a religious fanatacism. We were fighting merely for the sake of the British Commonwealth and the love which bound commonwealth countries together.

We expressed our desire to the British Colonel that we were very keen indeed to get nearer to the Jap hill. He advised us to go from the back of the hill where we sat and then work our way from the left. He warned us that the situation was very delicate indeed. The slightest movement in the bushes would invite a colossal machine gun barrage from the Japs. Both sides faced each other in a very tense mood, like Sir Lancelot and King Arthur of England's army facing the Scottish army near a hill, when a single warrior's drawing of a sword to kill a snake, started the most deadly battle within a few seconds when both sides jumped at each other's throats.

It was curiosity which was driving us towards the Jap line. We had requested the British Colonel to keep his Indian troops ready in case the enemy decided to send a section towards us with a view to capturing us alive. Creeping upto two hundred yards of the enemy's front line in modern warfare is a great achievement. We were determined on crawling on our bellies in order to get nearer.

We worked our way very carefully from the back of the hill where 14/10 Baluch held their position. The jungle was very thick towards the left. Gradually we started moving forward under cover of tall bushes

and jungle scrub. We had worked in a semi circle and were now within five hundred yards of the Jap hill. A shell came screaming on top of our heads. I thought we had our chips today. The British Liason Officer shouted "Look out". Never have I acted so quickly in my life. There was an eight feet deep ditch to my right. How quickly a man's reflex action functions in danger. I found myself flat on my belly in this ditch. I held my breath and kept my head well down under the steel helmet. There was a heavy explosion. Dust and sand were flung high up in the air. The shell burst about four hundred yards ahead of us, almost at the bottom of the Jap hill. Then several shells came in quick succession and exploded on top of the Jap hill. Thank God it was our Medium guns that were plastering the Jap front line.

I stood up and dusted my clothes, pulling the steel helmet correctly over my head. I burst out laughing as I looked at the British A.L.O. who had almost smashed up his glasses in going down to the ground with such rapidity and speed. Mehar stood there wiping the dust off his beard. My laughter could have been heard for miles. Then we all joined in a hearty laugh and dusted the British A.L.O.'s clothes because he was more keen on mending his broken glasses than shaking the dust off his bush shirt and khaki trousers.

There was a little pause in the shelling by our mediums. We trekked forward under cover of tall jungle bushes and scrub. Now we were within about four hundred yards from the Jap front line. What a ghastly silence on top of the Jap hill! Almost every bush could be seen clearly on the slope of the enemy hill. What a grim picture the enemy front line presents! Not a leaf moved on top of the hill. A few more of our medium shells burst on top of the enemy ridge. Clouds of dust and smoke were thrown up high in the air. "Do you think, our attack is coming from the Indian brigade to our left". I enquired from the British army liason officer. "No" was the reply. "This is a normal softening up process adopted by our artillery". The Japs could not reply back as their guns were dwindling in Arakan. The game had been reversed as compared to 1941-1942, when the Japs could lash out at will and the poor

Indian army could hardly stand up to such a terrific onslaught. Now it was the other way round. The Japs took all the punishment and we gave it to them good and proper. But I must say that never in my life have I seen such a brave enemy before. They kept their heads well down when extensive dive bombing and shelling by our field guns, mountain artillery, and medium guns was in progress. But they stood up when our brave Baluch, Pathan, Punjabi, Sikh, Jat, Dogra, Rajput or Gurkha troops advanced towards them. They fought for every inch of land in Arakan. They were slipping back or rather being eliminated inch by inch; but God alone knows that it would have taken us ten years to eliminate them completely from Arakan and Burma had it not been for the American Atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I can still say proudly that we were definitely pushing the Japs back inch by inch on each day.

We returned back to the hill where our brave 14/10th Baluch held the position. The British Colonel was very happy to see us. His Pathan troops had prepared some tea and we sat down. Never had tea tasted so good before. Indian and British troops and officers always loved their mug of tea at several intervals during the day time. During a night attack or watch, a mug of hot tea was a great stimulant. In fact, the British and Indian army and Air Force always won their battles on tea more than on anything else. Pathan troops enjoyed looking at us. One of them talked to me in Pushto and was delighted to find that I also came from the Frontier. The British Colonel was more of a Pushtoon than any of us. He had spent years on the North West Frontier and knew each and every corner of the settled districts and the tribal territory. He talked to me about Khan Bahadur Sharbat Khan and his sons. Then we talked for a long time about Jehangira village and the fruit gardens of the Khan Bahadur.

With a very heavy heart we said good bye to the British Colonel with grand greying moustache, and our brave 14/10th Baluch. We gradually followed the line of mules down the hill and walked for about half an hour before we came to our jeep parked under a thick tree. Mehar at the control of the jeep made our

very pleasant. There was only one speed which knew and I need not repeat it here again.

Past Bawli Bazaar we met a continuous stream motor vehicles and our supply echelons either coming pto the front line or returning back empty. One could not fail to appreciate the work of R.I.A.S.C. and the system of supplies in Arakan. Scores of battalions of infantry, and scores of squadrons of the Royal Air Force and ten squadrons of the Indian Air Force could not operate in a modern war without the most efficient system of food, fuel, and ammunition supply, executed by the Royal Indian Army Service Corps.

Next day I asked Mehar to give me an aircraft for local flying. I enjoyed about an hour's local flying. That evening a large consignment of poultry had been received as field ration. So Mehar thought it was a good opportunity of giving the squadron a good treat. A squadron grand dinner was arranged with the help of the three flight commanders; Flight Lieutenants, Hassan, Shiv Dev Singh, Nazirullah, and the Squadron M.O. Flight Lieutenant Khurana. A variety show was arranged by the troops followed by dinner in a G.P. tent.

I was amazed at the local talent in No. 6 Squadron, with very primitive oriental, musical instruments like a harmonium, Sattar, Tabla, Flute, and a Sarangi; our airmen produced a musical and song drama with a few comical character sketches which could have been compared with anything professional on the New Delhi or Calcutta stage. It was amazing to find how good our airmen were. Without this type of entertainment, life at a front line airfield like Ratnap would have been like Hell.

A few good looking boys came up on the open air stage dressed up as women. Plenty of powder, lip stick, rouge and mascara had been used. Captivating oriental feminine dresses were used. Artificial breasts were affixed with such grace and beauty. The hot rhythmic music and tantalizing movements of the full breasts would attract an utterence of a tremendous 'umph' from the older and tough Sergeants, corporals and the fighter boys who were the spectators and the admiring audience. All the nearby village folks including men and women turned up in large numbers and

applauded the show. Bashful damsels from t
villages squatted on the ground in large n
They giggled loudly as our artificial popsies o
stage sang and danced with rhythmic movements of
hips and breasts. Each of our artificial popsies h
plenty of tinkling bells tied round her feet and arms.
The tinkling bells combined with a beautiful filmy gana
sung by the leader of the orchestra and the rhythmic
movements of the artificial popsies on the stage produced
a tremendous ecstatic entertainment for hundreds of our
squadron personnel and the villagers who watched the
show.

The show finished at about midnight. Mehar had arranged with No. 20 Squadron R.A.F. to carry out a limited number of fighter recce sorties for the next day. Mehar and I drove up to his basha hut perched up on top of a hill. He made an almost vertical ascent up the hill to his basha hut in his jeep. The top of the hill was nearly one hundred feet from the ground. No other man could possibly do this vertical ascent in a jeep except Mehar. It was practically impossible for a normal person but Mehar was an exceptional Human Being in all respects except for affairs with a woman. He was dead frightened of a woman.

Evelyn told me this story at Dacca Tejgaon Airport in the year 1954 nearly four years after Mehar's death in an air crash. Evelyn, a pretty English girl was married to an Indian officer in No. 6 Squadron I.A.F. just after the conclusion of war in 1945. The squadron was posted at Bhopal. At the squadron bar, Eve's husband and flight Lieutenant Hassan persuaded Eve to stand next to Mehar Singh wherever he stood. It was most amusing. Wherever Mehar stood Evelyn would turn up with a glass of Sherry in her hand. She wore a bedazzling evening gown with plenty of jewellery powder, paint, lip stick, rouge and mascara. Fragrance of a Parisian perfume and Evelyn's bewitching looks would frighten Mehar from one corner of the bar to the other. No one knew the joke except Evelyn's husband and Flight Lieutenant Hassan, the senior Flight Commander in No. 6 Squadron. Mehar would be busy talking to a bunch of pilot officers when Eve would turn up holding a glass of sherry. She would purposely stand

next to Mehar and quietly listen to the talk on broader subjects of sports and flying. Within two seconds Mehar would branch off from the party and join a second group. And then five minutes later Eve would again turn up and stand at a little distance from Mehar; quietly listening to the talk. Immediately the smell of the perfume came to Mehar's nostrils, he would quietly walk away and join a third group of flying officers. For three quarters of an hour; Evelyn chased Mehar Singh from one corner to another. Eventually he was so browned off that he rushed out; got into his jeep and drove away. Evelyn's husband and Flight Lieutenant Hassan laughed with mirth. A good looking woman was too much for Mehar, He was dead frightened of a woman.

Next morning we had a late breakfast and sat looking at some illustrated newspapers and magazines in the basha hut which was the squadron ante room. To look at some of the Hollywood film stars in swim suites was a dream in the wild jungles of Arakan amidst the burst of aerial bombs and rattle of machine guns. We had a late lunch also and then some coco in Mehar's hut. "I am browned off, Zaidy" said Mehar "Let us go and look up No. 20 Squadron R.A.F." This was a good idea. They were not very far from us. They were situated near the Naf river and the sea coast. We put on a clean bush shirt and khaki trousers. Soon we were away along the main road travelling at the usual speed. We had covered about forty miles. The road lay along a picturesque portion of the sea coast almost hugging the beach. Tall coconut trees were there in abundance. The sea shore curved inwards. Thousands of song birds fluttered in the tropical trees. It was a captivating sight. Thick green coconut groves stretched upto miles in front and to the left and white foam capped ocean waves dashed against the silvery white sands of the shore, on the right. "What a romantic setting" said I to Mehar. But Romantic setting meant nothing to him unless he saw a Jap aircraft doing a low approach over the horizon. But there was not a sound. There was dead silence except the murmur of the rippling waves dashing against the shore line. "The place is lousy with elephants" said Mehar adjusting his turban in a fast moving jeep. "Amazing; they do not touch or hurt a human being.

They do not like petrol bowsers and troop lavatories. They do not even look at a human being". I listened quietly. "No. 20 are not very far from here".

Mehar looked to the right and whistled loudly. "Wha-o-o-o-o, do you see what I see"? I looked to the right where the rippling white capped waves were dashing against a rock which protruded out to sea. Lo and behold! At a distance of a hundred yards there was a young pretty white Popsy in a latest fashioned two piece yellow swim suite. She emerged from behind a big boulder and gracefully walked along the beach where the gentle waves kissed her feet. "Boy! it is a mirage" said I. "How on earth can a white Popsy, pop up in the middle of the jungles of Arakan? She certainly is not a Mugh girl. She is too white and look at the Bikini swim suite. Hold your horses, Mehar" said I. "Let me survey the situation". But Mehar after slowing down to a snail's pace was not prepared to stop. "She is probably an English nurse who has come up to visit the casuality clearing stations and first aid posts in the front line" was his reply. "Probably another Florance Nightingale to repeat the heroic deeds of Crimea in Arakan". "But don't be silly Mehar, no woman is permitted to come to the front line, leave alone a white popsy" said I "Officers and troops are under a touch of Arkanitis. Between thousands of Arkanitis stricken men, it would be inadvisable to let loose a few pretty white nurses. Look at the story of the American air base at Karachi where two hundred white nurses were brought to look after five thousand Yankee G.I's in 1942. The pretty white Popsies had to be repatriated to America by air within four month's of their arrival in Karachi and not one of them was serviceable".

Mehar would not stop to let me have a look at that Bikini wearing white maiden. Soon we were in the squadron mess of No. 20 Squadron. What a wonderful collection of British boys! We always had a soft corner for No. 20 Squadron because it was this squadron under Squadron Leader Fairweather at Peshawar in April 1936 to which we were attached as an additional flight for Frontnier Operations. Squadron Leader Fairweather was long dead in operations over Norway

1939-40). None of the old boys were there, but our love and affection for No. 20 Squadron was always there.

Mehar introduced me to all the officers of the Squadron including their C.O. They had ordered a soft drink for me and Mehar had a double whisky glass in his hand. In walked four ENSA girls who had been sent to Arakan all the way from England by the arrangements of the Air Ministry. This was a touring show for the entertainment of troops in the field. Our General Head Quarters at New Delhi had made similar arrangements in sending a few leading Indian film stars from Bombay to the Western desert in order to entertain the troops of the famous 4th and 8th Indian divisions serving in the western desert of Africa.

Three of these dames were quite tolerable but the fourth one had hips like a baby elephant. These dames probably could never have been tolerated on the stage in West end, but for British and Indian troops in Arakan these ENSA dames probably eight in number where like Hollywood stars touring and entertaining American G.I's in the Pacific. The fat dame in dark blue beach pyjamas was holding a cigarette in a holder about half a mile long. In talking to these dames I learnt that the real glamour dame of the party had gone out for a swim with the Wing Commander. This was the dame that Mehar and I saw at the beach. But she was all alone at that time; the Wing Commander was probably hiding behind big boulders, when he saw an intruding Jeep with two Indian Squadron Leaders sitting in it.

It was an exceedingly pleasant evening that we spent with the boys of No. 20 Squadron Royal Air Force. We wished them good night at about 8 P.M. and started back for Ratnap. I loaded my revolver and kept it ready in my hand for any wild animal blocking our way. The place was infested with panthers and tigers. A small gazelle was caught in the light of our jeep but it quickly darted off the road. I did not intend to fire for the sake of a small gazelle only and cause a tremendous botheration to our front line troops who might have suspected a Jap night raid.

When we reached Ratnap, the orderly officer for the day handed over a signal from Air H.Q. This

was my posting orders to Assam to take over Command of No. 7 Squadron I.A.F. from Hem Chowdhry. I was not particularly pleased to read this signal as I was hoping to take over, Command of a wing either in Arakan or in Assam and not a squadron. The wing should have consisted of only two squadrons of the Indian Air Force. And there were many I.A.F. squadrons in this theatre of war. I had done fourteen years regular flying with the Indian Air Force, and had formed and commanded No. 2 Squadron in April 1941 at Peshawar.

Duty has to be done in the Air Force during war and peace. "Even those serve who stand and wait". Next morning Mehar Singh gave me a 15 C.W.T. truck to collect rest of my kit from Ramu and then join a convoy heading for Chittagong and then Northwards to Assam. Mehar gave a very hearty hand shake and then we embraced each other before I got in the front seat. The truck moved away. All the boys of 6 Squadron had come to say good bye to me. They waved as I looked back from a good distance.

——o: THE END :o——

(A. B. AWAN)
Wing Commander
14th April, 1955

— EPILOGUE —

For the past century and a half citizens of our vast country stretching from Peshawar to Cape Camorin and from Jiwani to Calcutta and Cox's Bazar have wandered over the world in search of knowledge. So long as the names of oxford Cambridge, London, Edinburgh, Manchester and Nottingham Universities and the Military Colleges at Cranwell, Woolwich, and Sandhurst remain; there will always be abundance of good will towards the United Kingdom from within the shores of our motherland.

Both Government of India and Pakistan will do exceedingly well to send their army, navy, and air force officers for advanced training to the particular military training institutions in U.K. There was a time somewhere about 1937-38 that No. 1 Squadron I.A.F. could do as any other first class squadron of the Royal Air Force. This was due to the fact that we were trained and we completed specialist courses in England. My recommandation would be to send all Flight Commanders and Squadron Commanders to England for completing advanced courses in flying. This recommendation pertains both to Indian Air Force and Royal Pakistan Air Force who are brothers in arms. Staff College courses for all ranks of Wing Commanders and above in the G.D. duties are exceedingly important. No Air Force in the world can be considered perfect unless it has a sufficient number of senior officers of the rank of Wing Commanders and above who have successfully completed staff college courses in England. There should be no nepotism in selecting capable officers for undergoing staff college training. Only those practical types who have flown for years and who have commanded a Flight, Squadron or Wing should be selected.

Both Indian Air Force and the Royal Pakistan Air Force must send a minimum number of ten cadets each; per year as entry to the Royal Air Force College Cranwell. Our traditions of sports, flying, drill, studies and social contacts must be kept up.

There should be a mutual programme of exchange of squadrons for training purposes. My suggestion would be that a squadron of the Royal Air Force containing a fair proportion of Australian, Canadian and New Zealander boys, but no South Africans should be posted on a mutual exchange programme at Peshawar, Karachi, Bombay and Calcutta. Similarly one I.A.F. and one R.P.A.F. army cooperation or fighter reconnaissance squadron should be posted at Old Sarum (Salisbury) and at another aerodrome near Lincoln in the North. Personnel of all these squadrons should be changed after completing one full year.

Senior officers of the rank of a Wing Commander and above must be sent to America on a good will tour with the American Air Force. Their methods of training and operation are exceedingly good although a little different to those of the Royal Air Force.

Finally before closing, I sincerely hope and pray to God, that the Indian Air Force and the Royal Pakistan Air Force may always remain as loving friends and brothers. This will keep our souls happy, when we are no more; We who made the first nucleus of the Air Force in our motherland.

Long live I.A.F. and R.P.A.F.

(A. B. AWAN)

Wing Commander,

18th April, 1955.